

**CHALLENGES THAT GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS FACE  
WHEN IMPLEMENTING THE IEP**

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**A Thesis**

*Submitted to the Faculty of Purdue University  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of*

**Master of Science**



School of Education at Purdue Fort Wayne

Fort Wayne, Indiana

May 2021

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Firstly, I would like to show my appreciation for Dr. Rama Cousik for her incredible support of this Masters project. I want to thank you for your patience, guidance and encouraging words. Without your constant guidance this project would not have been possible. I would also like to thank Dr. Jeong Il Cho and Dr. Jane Leatherman for their support and guidance towards my Master's degree and insight to my thesis project.

A special thank you to the principal, [REDACTED], for letting me conduct my research at the school and to the teachers for taking the time out of their day to complete the survey that I created for my study. Without your work and support, this project would not have been possible.

A very special thank you to Sierra Miranda, for always being there for me when I was stressed out over this project. You were there for me through all of my technology mishaps, even when I was overly upset about them, you never left my side. Thank you for allowing me to bounce ideas off you and always having my back. You allow me to express my frustrations, without criticizing or belittling me. Thank you to my parents for helping out with my kids when I needed to go to class during my master's program.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	6
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	7
Statement of the Problem.....	7
Significance of Project.....	8
Purpose of the Study .....	9
Research Approach .....	9
Definition of Terms.....	10
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	12
Introduction.....	12
A Comprehensive Analysis of the IEP .....	12
Lack of Knowledge of the IEP .....	13
Commonly Encountered Challenges in IEP Implementation .....	16
Lack of Training of General Education Teachers.....	18
Lack of Support .....	21
Lack of Collaboration .....	23
General Education Teacher Attitudes on Inclusion .....	25
Factors Influencing Teachers’ Attitudes.....	27
Key Findings from the Literature Review .....	29
Justification of a Handbook .....	33
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .....	35
Introduction.....	35
Research Methodology .....	36
Participants.....	37
Setting .....	38
Research Design.....	38
Data Sources .....	39
Data Collection Procedures.....	40
Special Project Description.....	41
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS .....	42

Introduction.....	42
Survey .....	43
Demographic Information.....	43
Prior Knowledge of Special Education Laws .....	45
Overall Challenges .....	46
Teachers Challenges .....	50
Attitudes .....	52
Common IEP Accommodations .....	55
Recommendations to Improve the IEP .....	57
Summary of the Results .....	58
CHAPTER 5: HANDBOOK .....	60
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION .....	87
Limitations of the Study and Handbook .....	88
Strengths of the Handbook.....	88
Recommended Use of the Handbook .....	89
Suggestions for Future Research .....	90
Personal Reflection .....	90
APPENDIX A. CITI TRAINING .....	92
APPENDIX B. IRB APPROVAL .....	93
APPENDIX C. SURVEY .....	96
APPENDIX D. RECRUITMENT LETTER.....	101
APPENDIX E. PRINCIPAL PERMISSION .....	102
APPENDIX F. TIMELINE.....	103
APPENDIX G: RAW DATA .....	104
REFERENCES .....	138
VITA.....	141

## **ABSTRACT**

Children with disabilities are more than ever placed in the general education class settings. While special educators are responsible for drafting and writing the IEP, General education teachers are responsible for implementing the IEP in the general education class setting. Studies show that general education teachers lack knowledge, support, and training of the IEP, which affects their attitudes toward inclusion. The purpose of this study was to identify what teachers know about the IEP and the challenges that they face with implementing them in their classrooms. In this study, data was collected from general education teacher surveys, and the results of the data were analyzed. From the data, it was determined that teachers face many challenges with the implementation of the IEP in their classes. From the data collected a handbook was created for general education teachers to utilize as a guide to overcome these challenges that they face when implementing the IEP in their classrooms was completed.

# **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

## **Statement of the Problem**

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is an important document that acts as a road map for students with disabilities and the services provided to them. The IEP ensures that students with disabilities receive free and appropriate education that is effective, implemented, monitored, and enforced (Rotter, 2014). In the United States, approximately 6.7 million students are receiving special education services (Fredrick, Raabe, Rogers, & Pizzica, 2020). The increase in the number of students receiving services comes with its challenges. Implementing the IEP and its components in the inclusive setting is crucial to the student's success, not to mention it is the law. According to O'Connor et al. (2016), "with more than half of the children with special needs being included in the regular classroom environment teachers' understanding of the special education laws is imperative" (p. 7). General education teachers are finding an increasing number of students with disabilities in their general education classes. With these growing numbers, teachers need to be able to make changes within their classrooms to reach the demands of diverse learners. This may be more challenging with little knowledge, training, support, and their attitudes on inclusion.

Historically, students with disabilities were not taught in the same space as their non-disabled peers. As of today, things have changed to educate those students with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), which states that students should be taught in an environment where their non-disabled peers are also taught. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) is a law protecting students with disabilities in K through 12 settings (Sacks & Halder, 2017). Grskovic and Trzcinka (2011) found that secondary general education teachers are primary educators of students with disabilities, but they do not feel prepared enough to teach them appropriately. In addition, they have rudimentary or no knowledge of the individual education plan or the IEP. Lack of knowledge of the IEP and its components is, in part, due to a lack of training. Other reasons for these challenges can be from no support, no time for collaboration, and an increased number of students with IEPs. Currently, teachers are also facing new challenges implementing the IEP due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, in 2020. There has been a mandatory push for distance learning, and students with disabilities are at an

increased risk of regression because special education services have been “removed, reduced, or modified” (Fredrick, Raabe, Rogers, & Pizzica, 2020, p. 748) as a result of the pandemic. Therefore, general education teachers need to learn about the IEP and its components while also assessing their attitudes towards inclusive classrooms by being exposed to more pedagogical training and collaboration opportunities, to effectively educate students with disabilities in their classrooms now and during the pandemic (Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011; Vaz, Wilson, Falkmer, Sim, Scott, Cordier, & Falkmer, 2015; Fredrick, Raabe, Rogers, & Pizzica, 2020).

### **Significance of Project**

This project is significant to both general and special education teachers, as well as the students with disabilities. With 6.5 million students with disabilities being taught in the public education inclusive class setting, all teachers and students with disabilities will benefit from increased training, knowledge of the IEP, support, and time for collaboration, especially with the current COVID 19 pandemic (Grskovic and Trzcinka, 2011; Fredrick, Raabe, Rogers, and Pizzica, 2020; Sacks, and Halder, 2017). By expanding their knowledge of the challenges associated with implementing the IEP, educators can begin to explore, collaborate and develop possible, feasible, solutions. Data collected from this study provided information about the current challenges that general education teachers face when implementing the IEP in their classrooms. That information was analyzed, and from that information, a handbook was created as a guide for general education teachers. This handbook is designed to help general education teachers understand the importance of the IEP and the laws protecting students receiving special education services, and provide guidelines and strategies on how to implement the IEP and its components in the general education classroom. This handbook aims to improve the general education teachers’ knowledge and allow them to effectively implement the IEP in their classrooms. By educating the general education teacher on the IEP, it may help students with disabilities become more successful in their inclusive classrooms.



### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify the general education teachers' knowledge about the laws that protect students with disabilities, in particular the IEP and its components, and the challenges that they face implementing the IEP in their classrooms. This study also identified the general education teacher's beliefs of the IEP and the implementation of it. The information from the study was collected and analyzed to create a handbook that assists general education teachers with the previously mentioned challenges. The project aimed to provide teachers with a guide on how to implement the components of the IEP, follow the Special Education laws, and overcome those challenges in their all-inclusive classrooms. Previous studies have been conducted and books have been created to provide education and training for students' participation in their IEP meetings (Marshall et al.1996; Martin et al. 2006) but there is a need for similar guides for general education teachers. Since there is also a need for students to be aware of their IEPs and understand how to participate in their meetings, there is an even bigger need for general education teachers to understand the IEP and overcome the challenges with implementing them. Due to this need and the lack of training provided to general education teachers the need for the handbook is valid.

### **Research Approach**

A survey research approach was utilized to conduct this study. Data was gathered through an anonymous survey given to secondary general education teachers at a high school in the Midwest. The participants for the survey consisted of general education teachers from a variety of content areas including but not limited to Social Studies, English, Science, Math, and Special Area classes, in grades nine - twelve. The survey was utilized to assess the general education teachers' knowledge of the IEP, and their beliefs on the implementation of the IEP in their general education classrooms. This survey was a one-time anonymous survey, with demographic information, scale questions, and open-ended short answer questions. This survey allowed general education teachers to discuss their prior knowledge of the IEP and express their opinions about the IEP's implementation.

The survey questions were created utilizing information collected from peer-reviewed articles pertaining to the subject. Sixty teachers were contacted through a recruitment email

requesting their assistance with completing the survey. The survey was created on Purdue Qualtrics and a link to the survey was attached to the email. Participants were informed that the survey was to be administered online, anonymously, and the results were kept anonymous. The participants had two weeks from the time the recruitment email was sent to complete the survey. At that time, the participants were reminded of the survey in hopes of collecting more. Once all the completed surveys were collected, the responses were then analyzed. Data was analyzed using the content analysis technique. The researcher looked to identify predetermined themes (deficiency in training and overall knowledge of the IEP, lack of support, and poor co-teaching relationships) within the participants' submitted surveys. The information collected was sorted based on similarities in the responses. The responses received influenced the direction taken in creating the handbook about the IEP components, and helpful strategies to promote implementation in the classroom.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA)** – a law that legally entitles students with disabilities to be provided services to meet their needs, this includes FAPE, LRE, IEP, zero exclusion, appropriate evaluations, and parents' rights and involvement. (Sacks & Holder, 2017).

**Inclusion** – this is including students who had disabilities in a classroom with non-disabled peers

**Least Restrictive Environment** – a student with a disability should be educated in a classroom and have the same opportunity as their peers who are not disabled (IDEA, Sec. 300.8).

**Individualized Education Plan (IEP)** – a legal document written for all students with a disability that describes the plan and services put in place for the individual student to be successful in the public school

**General Education Teacher** – teachers who teach content-specific core classes such as but not limited to Math, English, Social Studies, and Science. These teachers do not teach in the special education class setting.

**Collaboration** – a term used when individuals work together as a team to produce something with a common goal. In the education setting all school personnel works together to create plans for success.

**Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)** – this is a right of students with disabilities to receive special education services provided by the school (IDEA, Sec. 300.8).

**Modifications** – changes made to what a student with a disability is expected to do on their classwork and tests

**Accommodations** – these relate to the slight alterations made to the material and environment to allow a student with a disability to access the course content. This also relates to assistive technology such as talk to text, etc.

**Co-teaching** – a collaboration effort between general and special education teachers who share all teaching responsibilities of students assigned to a single classroom (Keefe & Moore, 2004)

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

Special education laws protect students with disabilities and require that their IEP be implemented in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Often, that least restrictive environment is the general education classroom taught by a general education teacher. Research has found that general education teachers lack the knowledge, training, and support to effectively teach students with disabilities in their classrooms. Other factors, such as the COVID 19 pandemic, attitudes toward inclusion, and Special education teacher shortages also contribute to the lack of implementation. A review of the literature was conducted from publication years 2010-2020 by searching key terms such as IEP Challenges, Least Restrictive Environment, COVID 19, Special Education, IEP Implementation, and Collaboration. Utilizing the PFW Academic Search Complete, a review of literature from journals that ranged from Special Education Journals, American Secondary Education, and SAGE Journals provided information to create the premise of this study. This review is divided into sections that focus on IEP Implementation Challenges, what an IEP is and the Laws that protect, and the attitudes that general education teachers have when teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive setting. These themes in the literature review illustrate how they are interconnected with the purpose of this study.

### **A Comprehensive Analysis of the IEP**

An IEP acts as the nucleus of providing free and appropriate education (FAPE). Rotter (2014) states “no document is more significant for ensuring effective and compliant program design, implementation, monitoring, and enforcement of the law” (p. 1). The IEP is one of the most important components in the implementation of special education services for students. The IEP is utilized as a blueprint for Special Education services. Completing an IEP is a process and takes collaboration among parents, teachers, administrators, and the student (Rotter, 2014). The IDEA which was later amended to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) protect the implementation of the IEP. This law controls how services are provided to children with disabilities ranging from ages birth to 21 in schools. This law makes sure the

child's right to FAPE is in the LRE. If a child is identified as having a disability it is required that they each have an IEP created with appropriate special education services (O'Connor, Yasik, & Horner, 2016).

The IDEA has required a certain process for schools to follow to develop the IEP, called the IEP process. This process requires certain participants to be included. Those required participants are the parent or guardian, the special education teacher, at least one general education teacher, a representative of the local education agency (this could be a principal, assistant principal, or guidance counselor), any other professionals that are needed on behalf of the student, and at a certain age, the student (Christle & Yell, 2010; Dilberto & Brewer, 2012). Each of these participants has a role that is required for their participation in the IEP process. The parent or guardian's participation is critical in the process, As they know their child best, not only is the participation of the parent critical to the student's success, it is the law (Christle & Yell, 2010). The special education teacher guides the IEP process. The Special Education teacher should contact all participants before the scheduled meeting and gather all of the information on the student and their progress. According to Dilberto and Brewer (2012), communication and planning are the driving forces behind successful IEP meetings. The representative of the local education agency is there to provide school procedure information that also includes graduation requirements for secondary students, behavior information, and any other information that they can input. The general education teachers' involvement in the IEP process has grown over the past years due to the requirements of LRE. IEPs that have been written without the general education teachers have been found to deny the student their right to FAPE (Dilberto & Brewer, 2012). "Special education teachers, general education teachers, and school and district administrators need to understand the procedural and substantive requirements of the law" (Christle & Yell, 2010, p. 113).

### **Lack of Knowledge of the IEP**

It is critical for general education teachers to possess a suitable amount of knowledge of the IEP process, its components, and the laws that protect it. General education teachers are required to be a part of the IEP process, and in charge of the implementation of it, because of these requirements, they should understand the laws as well to eliminate the opportunity of

violating legal rights (Christle, and Yell, 2010; O'Connor, Yasik, and Horner, 2016; Rotter, 2014).

As many general education teachers lack knowledge of the laws protecting students with disabilities, it is crucial that they understand them to begin implementing appropriate services to them in the classroom (O'Connor, Yasik & Horner, 2016). With students receiving special education services and spending more than 80% of their day in the inclusive setting, there are laws protecting them and it is required for their IEPs to be implemented. According to the study conducted by O'Connor, Yasik, and Horner (2016), only 43% of general education teachers with 5 years of experience or less had a general knowledge of the Education Laws out of a total of fifty-eight teachers. Of the teachers answering questions about IDEIA, 52% did not know or have any knowledge of the law. Thus it is clear that general education teachers cannot effectively teach students with disabilities if they do not have the proper knowledge of the laws that protect them and the implementation of its components.

A critical component of the implementation of the IEP is the involvement of the teachers, both special and general education teachers. Not only is the participation of the general education teacher crucial for the success of the student, the special education laws require it. During the IEP process, the required participants are a parent or guardian, the special education teacher, general education teacher, the student when it is appropriate, an education representative, and a school psychologist interpreting evaluation results when necessary (Christle & Yell, 2010).

Rotter (2014) conducted a study utilizing 426 teachers from a suburban school in New Jersey. The study examined the views of the teachers on when they read an IEP after receiving it, how they measure IEP goals, and how they view the usefulness of the IEP in their planning. Of the participants, 73% of them were general education teachers ranging from elementary to high school. The participants of this study were given a questionnaire that included demographic-related questions and thirteen questions that dealt with the usefulness of the IEP. "With greater efforts being made to place students, inclusively, into GE classes, the task of implementing and updating the IEP now frequently falls to both the GE and SE teachers" (Rotter, 2014, p. 5). The key findings of this study were that although teachers are receiving access to the students' IEPs they are still entering the classrooms with teachers who have not read their IEPs and made accommodations to the curriculum, this should be done prior to the beginning of the school year.

The study also found that progress monitoring is important, but schools are utilizing classroom grades to determine the student's progress instead of taking a look at their goals, which two-thirds of the participants said that they do. One final finding of this study was recommendations to the IEP. Two issues within this study arose that included, simplifying the IEP and the need to increase specificity and clarity. Of the comments made by the teacher participants, 47 expressed the need to simplify the IEP (Rotter, 2014).

A second study discussed in the previous literature was on the knowledge that teachers possess of the Special Education Laws put in place for students with disabilities. This study was conducted by O'Connor, Yasik, and Horner (2016) to determine teachers' familiarity, knowledge, and training related to IDEIA. Participants for this study included 58 teachers ranging from kindergarten to eighth grade in the New York City Metropolitan area. All teachers were general education teachers with five or fewer years of experience. The survey consisted of 17 true/false questions about IDEIA and Section 504. Then the teachers were asked four open-ended questions about their knowledge of the laws and how the laws affected the work that they do with students. The key findings of this study showed that teachers lack important information about IDEIA and Section 504. "Teachers are typically misinformed and lack knowledge about education law, which in turn may inadvertently violate students' legal rights (O'Connor, Yasik, & Horner, 2016, p. 16)". It is imperative for teachers to be informed, and even principals believe that teachers must be mostly informed of special education laws (O'Connor, Yasik, & Horner, 2016).

In recent research, Morgan (2019) collected surveys from 93 general education teachers in New Jersey. The purpose of her study was to identify general education teachers' knowledge of the IEP, the training they have received, their attitudes and self-efficacy of implementing inclusive education. The findings from this study determined that general education teachers know very little about education laws. In this study, their knowledge did not determine if they felt prepared or capable enough to teach students with disabilities. Roughly, about 30% of the participants had no training on the laws protecting students with disabilities. "Limited pre-service and in-service training in the current sample suggest general education teachers have very few opportunities to learn about special education law" (Morgan, 2019, p. 35). The lack of training can cause general education teachers to rely on special education teachers, and other

special education specialists for assistance when it comes to making sure that teachers are following the IEP according to the laws that protect it (Morgan, 2019).

Furthermore, in the recent study, there is a lack of a statistically significant correlation between the general education teachers' knowledge of the laws and their self-efficacy to teach students with disabilities. "General education teachers are not aware that they are not providing appropriate education to each of their students because they are unaware of the legal rights of their students" (Morgan, 2019, p. 38). These teachers may have high levels of self-efficacy to teach students with disabilities when they utilize differentiated instruction. They may believe that providing differentiated instruction is implementing the IEP but could be unaware that they are not implementing the IEP as it should be.

### **Commonly Encountered Challenges in IEP Implementation**

In 2017, the United States had approximately 6.5 million students receiving some sort of special education services in the public school system. With the growing number of students, receiving services there are bound to be challenges (Sacks & Halder, 2017). Sacks and Halder (2017) identified several challenges to implementing the IEP in the US, such as quality of services, special education teacher shortages, unsatisfactory educator-family relationships, cultural insensitivity and ignorance, and the lack of sufficient training for educators to teach students with disabilities. Quality of services is how special education services are provided to the student, and this is important for the success of the student. Many districts are struggling to fill special education teacher positions (Peyton, et al 2020), which can account for the high caseload and responsibilities put on the special education teacher. Both teachers and families of students with disabilities must have positive relationships with one another for the success of the student. Teachers need to be adequately trained to teach special education students in their inclusive classrooms to reduce negative attitudes towards inclusion. Sacks and Halder (2017) state, "special education is intended to meet the specific and unique educational needs that result from students' with disabilities" (p. 960), with insufficient training the IEP implementation suffers, and the students may not get the education they are intended to receive.

According to Grskovic and Trzcinka (2011), general education teachers do not feel prepared to teach students with disabilities in their classrooms, mainly due to that lack of training. "This study provides a unique voice on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that new



secondary content teachers need in order to effectively teach students with disabilities in general education classes” (Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011, p. 104). The authors state poor collaborative relationships with families and the collaboration between general and special educators as another challenge (Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011; Sacks & Halder, 2017). According to these two studies, building these collaborative relationships is crucial to the success of the student.

Collaboration between the special and general education teachers, students, and family directly affect the IEP process. The student’s IEP goals are to be completed with the participation of the general education teachers and the family’s input. If there is not a positive collaborative relationship between all parties then the student is at risk of limited success. The family of the student with a disability must understand the importance of the IEP, and the importance of their participation in the process for the student’s educational success. Lack of knowledge about the IEP and the laws can present challenges for implementation in the classroom. O’Connor, Yasik, and Horner (2016) stated that “due to the fact that more of these children are being included in the regular classroom environment, it is imperative for teachers to understand all aspects of special education laws” (p. 7). Teachers need to be better informed of the Special Education laws, not only to protect them, but the student and the school from legal issues (O’Connor, Yasik & Horner, 2016). The results of this study showed that teachers lack information that is essential to IDEIA (O’Connor, Yasik & Horner, 2016). The special education law that protects students’ rights is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), this law ensures that the student has a right to free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment (O’Connor, Yasik, & Horner, 2016). According to a case law analysis conducted by Zirkel and Hetrick (2017), a high number of litigations against schools had to do with participation in the IEP process. A final challenge with implementing the IEP in an inclusive setting is from lack of support. With limited support from administrative staff, special education teacher shortages, and positive collaborative relationships, the implementation of the IEP cannot be effective especially with the current issue of the COVID 19 Pandemic (Grskovic, and Trzcinka, 2011; Sacks, and Halder, 2017; Fredrick, Raabe, Rogers, and Pizzica, 2020). Students with disabilities “are especially vulnerable to regression when services is removed, reduced, or modified” (p.1), which are the challenges that schools are facing due to the recent COVID 19 Pandemic (Fredrick, Raabe, Rogers, and Pizzica, 2020).

## **Lack of Training of General Education Teachers**

Education programs for content area teachers have taken a less than ideal focus on content rather than a focus on pedagogy. Due to the increased number of students with disabilities in an inclusive setting, content area teachers are having a more difficult time teaching them because of the decreased pedagogical training in their undergraduate studies, as Grskovic and Trzcinka (2011) pointed out when discussing with the local governor on education reform. This education reform spends less time on pedagogical practices taught to new teachers and more time spent on learning the content they will be teaching. As a governor quoted in Grskovic and Trzcinka's study (2011),

We are going to redefine what is expected of a teacher in... It's going to revolutionize the colleges and schools of education much more in terms of content knowledge, much less in terms of pedagogical training. We're going to expect students who want to teach spending much more of their time studying the subject they are going to be teaching in the schools (p. 104-105).

This means that new teachers are not being trained on how to teach and mostly on what they will be teaching. An effective teacher is someone who can teach their content in a way that all students will understand, and that is why pedagogy is important. Due to the complex nature of schools with inclusive practices, teachers have a need to teach content in a variety of different ways to successfully educate all students, including those with disabilities (Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011). This is important to the implementation of the IEP because it takes a creative educator with diverse knowledge and skills and the right disposition to teach students with disabilities.

Grskovic and Trzcinka (2011) conducted a study to identify the knowledge, skills, and their outlook on what is vital to prepare secondary general education teachers to effectively teach students in their inclusive classrooms. The survey was given to general and special education teachers, and parents of students who have taught, teach or have children with disabilities at the secondary level of education. According to this research, 31 essential educational standards should be taught to prepare content area teachers at the secondary level to teach students with disabilities. This research suggests that preservice teachers need to be taught more content about different disabilities and need more experience working with individuals with disabilities. Education to manage their classrooms was also listed as one of the important standards. These

factors are important to eliminate negative attitudes toward inclusion and teaching students with disabilities (Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011).

Inclusive education was pushed to provide education equality for students with disabilities (Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, & Hudson, 2013). For over 20 years inclusion has been used, yet content area teachers are still lacking the preparation to teach those students with disabilities in their classroom. Mandates to the IDEIA require that students with disabilities be taught curriculum state standards at their grade level (Allday et al. 2013). According to Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, and Hudson (2013), there are 4 basic skills that teachers need to possess to effectively teach diverse learners. First, teachers need to understand the characteristics of students with disabilities and understand their role in the IEP process. “Successful inclusion of students with disabilities depends upon the active involvement of general educators in the IEP process” (Jones, 2012, p. 297). Second, they need to be skilled in providing differentiated instruction. Thirdly, they need to be knowledgeable in classroom management strategies to eliminate distractions in their classrooms. Lastly, they need to be skilled in proficient collaboration skills with special education teachers. According to Grskovic and Trzcinka (2011), general education teachers at the secondary level did not receive training specific to students with disabilities because inclusive practices were lower than that of today, and many of those teachers do not feel adequately trained to deal with the behavioral challenges that come from students with disabilities. This information also applies to newer teachers who have an increased role to teach in the inclusive class setting. According to Morgan (2015), teachers have a high self-efficacy in their ability to teach students with disabilities and find themselves proficient in differentiating instruction, despite the lack of training that they may have received in their pre-service and in-service instruction.

Modifications and adaptations to current curriculums have been mandated by law to increase the success for students with disabilities. Importantly, these modifications determined by the IEP team must be listed in the students’ IEPs and implemented with fidelity. By providing differentiated instruction and applying principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), teachers can provide instruction to meet the needs of all students. For a teacher to effectively utilize those strategies, opportunities for them to practice them are a necessity, and with proper teacher preparation programs, this could be possible. However, according to Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, and Hudson (2013) pre-service teachers are only given a small amount of training in

inclusive practices. It is noted that there is an increased need for better training in these areas. Most of the coursework provided to pre-service teachers on special education focuses more on the characteristics of the disability and less on the methodologies for inclusive practices. An improvement is needed in the coursework for pre-service teachers to include better training in inclusive practices to work with students with disabilities (Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, & Hudson, 2011).

Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature that focuses on current general education teachers' knowledge to effectively teach students with disabilities. According to Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, and Hudson (2013), "It is evident that many university teacher preparation programs in elementary education are allocating minimal coursework to issues related to disabilities and may not be adequately preparing their graduates for entry into today's inclusive schools (p. 306)" The study also states that only 27% of university programs offer courses on differentiating instruction, which is beneficial to all learners, not just students with disabilities (Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, & Hudson, 2013). The information provided in this study focuses on elementary education; however, there is a gap in the research for this type of preparation for secondary educator programs. One study by Berry (2011) described the need for pre-service training and ongoing professional development that should include: student teaching with a special education teacher in the room; informal professional development opportunities that allow for observations with other teachers that have good classroom management; and time to talk to others to bounce ideas and strategies off of one another (Berry, 2011).

In the study conducted by Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, and Hudson (2013) they reviewed college coursework of one hundred and nine elementary education bachelor's degree programs. The colleges offer initial elementary education certifications in the United States. This study found that approximately half of the universities' coursework focused on teacher preparation and instruction. From those universities, between seven and ten percent, approximately seven credit hours, of those courses dedicated to preparation were dedicated to teaching students with disabilities. "It is evident that many university teacher preparation programs in elementary education are allocating minimal course work to issues related to disabilities and may not be adequately preparing their graduates for entry into today's inclusive schools" (p. 306). This can cause teachers to feel burnt out and leave their jobs within a few years (Allday, Neilsen-Gatti & Hudson, 2013).

## **Lack of Support**

General education teachers are supposed to work collaboratively with special education teachers for the successful implementation of a student's IEP in the inclusive class setting. According to Sacks and Halder (2017), there is a shortage of special education teachers each year in 49 out of 50 states, where school districts are rushing to fill thousands of vacancies. Due to this shortage, general education teachers do not have the support for the effective implementation of an IEP in their classroom. In addition to special education teacher shortages, general educators, according to Fuchs' study of perceived barriers associated with inclusion in 2010, it was found that general educators reported that they need more administrative support and cooperation between themselves and special educators.

Fuchs (2010) study utilized 10 Elementary school teachers in a suburban Midwestern City who were getting their Master's Degree in Teacher Leadership. For this study, they interviewed teachers in two different focus groups, utilizing open-ended questions. After the initial focus group, five teachers were selected to engage in the final interview and classroom observations. After the data was analyzed, it was determined that the barriers that affect inclusion were lack of support from administration and special educators. Teachers believed that this lack of support was brought on by a high demand of expectations that were unrealistic. Especially with little to no training from the district of their administration (Fuchs, 2010). The lack of support general education teachers feel from special education teachers and staff has caused problems as they feel that some special educators come into the classroom and often sit at the back and work on things unrelated to the class. One other issue these general education teachers have is with special educators consistently leaving the classroom and leaving all of the students for the general education teacher to handle alone (Fuchs, 2010).

In a study conducted by Morgan (2019) it was determined that general education teacher's lack appropriate training, but they are resourceful and have high levels of self-efficacy. These general education teachers are finding ways to train themselves by looking for support by other means. The study suggests that school psychologists are a great resource when working with students with disabilities, but general education teachers are not all aware that they can utilize them as a resource. Only 41% of the general education teachers utilize the school psychologist as a resource when providing instruction to students with IEP's, but on the contrary, about 87% utilize a special education teacher (Morgan, 2019). Another reason for this is that

school psychologists are often spread thin, as they are split between multiple buildings across a school district. According to Morgan (2015), school Psychologists should make it known that they can be utilized as a resource and even be encouraged to lead professional development for in-service training (Morgan, 2019).

With the high number of special education teacher shortages in the United States according to Berry et al. (2012), less qualified teachers are hired to fill those vacancies. Due to the rush to fill these positions, teachers with limited training and certification for these positions are less committed to the position and have a difficult time doing their jobs effectively. These teachers often feel overwhelmed and dissatisfied with their job choice. In the study conducted by Berry et al. (2012), a total of 203 special educators and 373 administrators from rural districts volunteered. The study was conducted utilizing interviewers who administered surveys to the participants through telephone interviews. The data collected from these interviews were analyzed by grouping the open-ended responses into categories (Berry et al., 2012).

The results of this study indicated a problem with the recruitment and retention of special educators, as well as providing appropriate professional development. In the interviews with the administration, over 50% of them said that they have a difficult time filling special educator positions. Seven percent of these districts were unable to fill these positions at all, and 13% of which are on provisional licenses. Administrators determined that the reason for limited special educator retention was based on eight percent leaving due to paperwork, while the remaining leave for competitive salaries, retirement, or personal reasons. However, the teachers being interviewed expressed their reasons for leaving is due to lack of support and the pressure put on them from the job. Of those participants, 27% of which either retire or want to reduce their responsibilities, and 24% are feeling the effect of burnout and stress. This burnout and stress can be prevented by providing appropriate professional development to special education teachers. Without adequate or appropriate training this affects the special education teacher shortage that we see in the study conducted by Berry et. al (2012).

General education teachers cannot be provided with the support that they need to teach students with disabilities in their inclusive classrooms if there are a limited amount of special education teachers. When there are no special education teachers present in a classroom with students with disabilities, those general education teachers are left to adapt and adjust on their own. When districts scramble to fill special education vacancies, those who are hired

consistently lack the appropriate certification and training. This continues to leave general education teachers adapting and adjusting on their own. Unfilled special education vacancies and job candidates who are hired without the appropriate certification and training make general education teachers feel unsupported when it comes to special education in the inclusive classroom.

In a recent study, Peyton et al (2020) found that there are seven states with regularly low Special Education teacher shortages and seven regularly high shortages of Special Education teachers. All of these states were compared utilizing a descriptive analysis using supply and demand variables. There were notable differences amongst those supply and demand variables. In the states that have low qualified Special Education teacher shortages, it was found that these states spend more funds investing in the education of their students with disabilities, teacher salaries tend to be higher, Special Education teacher graduates are more prepared to teach students with disabilities, and in these states, there are more graduates in this field. From this study, it was suggested that in the states with lower shortages Special Education teaching is a better job than in those states with higher shortages.

### **Lack of Collaboration**

For general education teachers to effectively understand and implement the IEP requirements and feel supported when working with students with disabilities, it is imperative that teachers effectively collaborate with each other. With a steady increase in the push of inclusion in the general education setting, there needs to be an increase in collaborative efforts. Collaboration between paraprofessionals, general, and special education teachers is a vital entity in the success of students with disabilities. Literature on inclusion and the need for collaboration repeatedly state the positive outcomes as long as collaboration is effectively met (Al-Natour, Al-Zboon, & Alkhamra, 2015; Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017; Jones, 2012; Keefe & Moore, 2004).

Collaboration between teachers has been defined as “a style of direct interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal” (Al-Natour, Al-Zboon, & Alkhamra, 2015, p. 65). Collaboration is discussed in the education sector, but as stated in the above definition it is voluntary, schools encourage collaboration but it is not monitored or enforced. Collaboration efforts can only be successful if

all parties are involved and have a common goal, which should be a success for all students. Special education teachers need to be masters in collaboration for a student with a disability to be successful, they need to be able to effectively communicate, cooperate with general education teachers, and be able to solve problems, plan and find solutions as a team (Jones, 2012). Collaboration does not come easy, as you have to work around others' beliefs and teaching styles. Effective collaboration requires effort, persistence, training, shared resources, and decision-making responsibilities (Al-Natour, Al-Zboon, & Alkhamra, 2015). According to Da Fonte and Barton-Arwood (2017), both general education and special education teachers should be taught collaboration during teacher preparation programs.

Collaboration can be challenging for both general education and special education teachers, especially in a co-teaching environment. Some common themes amongst a few studies have been teacher relationships, time constraints, lack of content knowledge, and poor cooperation (Al-Natour, Al-Zboon, & Alkhamra, 2015; Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017; Keefe & Moore, 2004). At the secondary level, teachers often collaborate through co-teaching where the idea of inclusion is utilized on a broader spectrum because pull-out services are limited. Da Fonte and Barton-Arwood (2017) found that preservice general and special education teachers have expressed the fear of limited time to collaborate. These preservice teachers believe that finding the time to collaborate is one of the top challenges to successful collaboration, even going as far as to say that some lack the interest in collaborating. This study also found that the limited time could be in part due to the increase of responsibilities, paperwork, and activities required of teachers daily (Da Fonte & Barton- Arwood, 2017).

Another area that has been found to have its challenges for general education teachers is the lack of content knowledge that the special education teacher that they are working with may have. Da Fonte and Barton- Arwood (2017) found that pre-service special education teachers fear that they cannot effectively help plan with general educators due to the lack of content knowledge. In comparison, general education teachers lack the knowledge of pedagogical practices for students with disabilities, as they are more heavily taught content knowledge in their pre-service education. Al-Natour, Al-Zoon, and Alkhamra (2015) found that the lack of content knowledge of special education teachers correlates to the difficulty of both general and special education teachers' ability to lesson plan and provided instruction together. . One other key to successful collaboration is positive communication. Pre-service teachers in a study



conducted by Da Fonte and Barton–Arwood (2017) expressed their fear with communication when it came to effective collaboration. Some believed that general and special educators having the ability to get along can be more important than know what to teach. It is important that those collaborating can understand one another, be open to others’ perspectives and be respectful while working toward the common goal of the students’ success (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017).

Collaboration is crucial for the appropriate implementation of IEP goals and the successful inclusion of students with disabilities. Due to limited research conducted at the secondary level, teachers tend to have an increase of negative beliefs towards it. This shows why there are different sets of challenges with collaboration while co-teaching is found at the secondary level (Keefe & Moore, 2004). Keefe and Moore (2004) found that secondary educators deal with the challenge of a difficult curriculum, larger class sizes and teaching multiple classes each day, and the roles of the general and special educator to be unclear. Large class sizes, and seeing multiple large classes each day puts a lot of stress and responsibilities on the general education teacher to create accommodations for students with disabilities. That stress causes unwillingness to make those accommodations and modifications to meet the needs of those students with disabilities (Keefe & Moore, 2004).

### **General Education Teacher Attitudes on Inclusion**

Attitude in this instance can be defined as the general education teachers’ disposition that is seen as favorable or unfavorable of inclusion as well as their feelings and emotional reactions to it (Ahmmed, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2012). Inclusion, a way to provide the LRE for students with disabilities, allows them to be placed in a classroom with their nondisabled peers. This is a different educational environment than what it looked like 30 years ago. Both the general and special education teachers play an integral part in this process. General education teachers’ attitudes toward inclusion affect the implementation of the IEP in the general education classroom setting. Factors that influence these attitudes may include but are not limited to general education teachers’ gender, age, self-efficacy, and training (Vaz et al., 2015). Grskovic and Trzcinka (2011) provide an example of a special education teacher’s encounter with a general education history teacher and their attitude toward inclusion. The general education teacher believed that they provided ample time to their students to complete assignments. The special education teacher argued that a student with a disability, with an appropriate

accommodation of extended time, by law, should be provided with said extended time. The general education teacher continued to argue their point and disregarded what the special education teacher had been saying. With inclusion more prevalent than ever, there is an increased need for collaboration amongst general and special education teachers. This process should include but not be limited to communicating effectively, cooperation (of both parties), problem-solving, and planning together to ultimately find solutions (Jones, 2012). Fuchs (2010) found that in several studies 75% of teachers who participated were not in favor of inclusion, and those negative attitudes and beliefs influence their behavior and educational choices while teaching.

More recent studies also point to these issues, for example, Hutzler et al. (2019), conducted a narrative study was about teachers in different countries around the world, specifically Physical Education (P.E) teachers. From this study, it was determined that P. E teachers do not feel prepared or confident enough to teach students with disabilities in an inclusive setting. From the findings, 75 articles were reviewed, 54 of which were specific to P.E teachers. This study found that several factors influence teachers' attitudes toward inclusion such as, the amount of personal and professional experience they have had with students with disabilities, the training they have received regarding inclusion, their gender, factors regarding the process of special education, and to which degree of the students' disability.

In another study, Hernandez, Hueck, and Charley (2016) wanted to examine the differences in general education and special education teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. They aimed to see if these teachers' levels of self-efficacy, teacher type, and education level played a role in their attitudes toward inclusion. Data was collected from 118 elementary and middle school teachers utilizing an online survey. The results of this study showed that Special Education teachers' attitudes toward inclusion were remarkably more positive than General Education teachers. Ultimately 2 predictors were identified for those differences, such as teacher type and self-efficacy. Those teachers with higher self-efficacy tend to have more positive attitudes toward inclusion. It was suggested that school districts work toward change by providing teacher training regarding inclusion teaching practices. Subsequently, this could improve student outcomes and taper the achievement gap. A study conducted by Miller (2017), found similar results when looking at secondary high school teachers. The results of this study showed that there is a significant difference between general education and special education

teachers' attitudes relating to inclusion. This study suggests that there should be an improvement in the practices of inclusion at the secondary level.

### **Factors Influencing Teachers' Attitudes**

Successful implementation of the IEP in an inclusive class setting is impeded by the attitudes of the teacher towards inclusion and the expectations they have of special education students (Vaz et al., 2015). One factor of those attitudes according to Vaz et al. (2015) was found to be based on their self-efficacy to teach special education students. Self-efficacy relates to the level at which a general education teacher feels that they are capable of teaching students with disabilities effectively. Special education students need teachers who are open and comfortable with utilizing a variety of instructional strategies and slow down their content delivery to reach all types of learners (Obiakor et al., 2012). Differentiated Instruction is one way to deliver content to reach all types of learners, for this to be beneficial teachers need to be open and flexible in altering the curriculum instead of requiring the learner to modify themselves to learn the content (Obiakor et al., 2012). When adjustments are not made the outcome for students with a disability is not favorable. Negative attitudes towards this type of education of inclusion can dampen the success of this process.

Vaz et al. (2015) found that general education teachers who display a high self-efficacy tend to be more open to different instructional strategies. With higher self-efficacy as a teacher, this leads to a variety of instructional strategies which can reach all students, as well as more positive attitudes towards inclusion. Vaz et al. (2015) also found that teachers with low self-efficacy are more likely to lead to blaming the student for their difficulties versus identifying possible issues with their content delivery. Those teachers with lower self-efficacy are often less willing to adapt and modify their instructional strategies to meet those needs. There were similar findings in a study conducted by Obiakor et al. (2012). If those teachers feel that the problem lies with the student that they feel just do not try hard enough and less on themselves they will not feel the need to vary their instructional strategies or slow down content delivery.

There have been conflicting studies about whether age and gender can play a role in the attitudes that teachers may have on inclusion. Some studies have shown that gender is not a significant indication of negative attitudes, while others have shown that training tends to affect younger teachers to have a positive outlook on inclusion, but not that of older teachers. Similarly,

some studies have shown that female teachers are more likely open to implementing education strategies and tolerant of inclusion, while some say that gender does not play a significant role (Vaz et al., 2015).

Teachers often do not feel prepared to teach students with disabilities because of a lack of in-service and pre-service training. With the feelings of low self-efficacy to meet the demands of diverse learners, lack of training can cause a high number of negative attitudes toward inclusion because teachers feel unprepared (Fuchs, 2010). This idea was also found to be true in the study conducted by Vaz et al. (2015). One of the factors that they found that had higher numbers of positive attitudes toward inclusion was when teachers reported having adequate training in teaching students with disabilities. Vaz et al. (2015) stated that an increase of pedagogical content knowledge related to teaching students with disabilities will improve teachers' attitudes toward inclusion in a more positive way.

A study by Vaz et al. (2015) to determine teachers' attitudes and efficacy towards inclusion was conducted by utilizing a cross-sectional survey of 74 primary school teachers in Australia. A 7-point Likert scale was utilized that contained 25 positive and negative statements about the inclusion of special education students. The Likert scale ranged from -3 (highly disagree) to +3 (highly agree). The higher the teachers' overall score, the poorer the teachers' attitude towards inclusion was. Vaz et al. (2015) found that the four factors that influence teachers' negative attitudes toward inclusion included that males, older age, and low self-efficacy tend to have more negative attitudes, whereas teachers who received training to teach students with disabilities had more positive attitudes toward inclusion.

A second study by Ahmmed, Sharma, and Deppeler (2012) was conducted to examine the different factors that influence teachers' attitudes toward inclusion in Bangladesh. Data from the study was collected from 738 teachers that work at the primary education level. A 5-point Likert scale was utilized in the survey that contained 21 items, 14 of which were negatively worded and seven were positively worded. This Likert scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The higher the scores indicated the association of positive attitudes toward inclusion. The results from this study showed that gender, education qualification, previous work history, and past success with teaching students with disabilities, and support for inclusion were factors that determined teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. Ahmmed, Sharma, and Deppeler's (2012) study showed different findings when it came to gender than that of Vaz et al. (2015).

Ahmmed, Sharma, and Deppeler (2012) found that males tend to have more positive attitudes than females, which was found to be the opposite in Vaz et al. (2015). One of the most significant factors found in Ahmmed, Sharma, and Deppeler (2012) in regards to the highest positive attitudes toward inclusion was how they perceived the support they received from their school and their self-efficacy from the success of teaching students with disabilities.

Perceived school support for inclusive teaching practices in the form of cooperation from the peer colleagues, school administrators, parents of the students and supply of teaching resources make a significant impact on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular classroom (Ahmmed, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2012, p. 138).

In recent research conducted by Morgan (2019), general education teachers tend to have positive self-efficacy when teaching students with disabilities. These teachers in this study believe that they do well with teaching students with disabilities by differentiating instruction. The results also indicated that even though the general education teachers lack knowledge of the laws, that access to other resources contributes to their level of self-efficacy. In this study, general education teachers have had plenty of experience teaching students with disabilities. "New Jersey has the fourth-highest percentage of students served under IDEIA in the nation" (p. 37). Due to these high numbers, it is likely that the general education teachers in this study have worked with or personally know someone with a disability, which can increase their passion to teach students with disabilities (Morgan, 2019). "Findings from the current study suggest general education teachers have positive attitudes toward inclusion and high levels of self-efficacy in implementing inclusive practices despite not having comparable levels of knowledge of special education law and training in inclusive practices" (Morgan, 2019, p. 44).

### **Key Findings from the Literature Review**

Modern education practice requires that students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment. The shift towards inclusive classrooms gained popularity after the Civil Rights movements in the 1960s; since then, legislators have been pushing for inclusive classrooms where all students have an opportunity to learn. Most of the time, the LRE is the general education classroom, where special education students have the opportunity to interact

with their non-disabled peers and the general education curriculum. The idea is that with the proper supports in place, students with disabilities can equitably access the curriculum without being pulled from the general education environment. For this to be effective, general education teachers must be familiar with and effectively implement each individualized education plan for their students with disabilities. Over time, though, research has suggested that general education teachers lack the knowledge, training, and support to effectively teach students with disabilities in their classrooms. Additionally, general education teachers' attitudes/beliefs about inclusion can have negative effects on their willingness to implement IEPs with fidelity. Furthermore, the COVID-19 Pandemic and special education teacher shortages in conjunction with poor attitudes and the lack of knowledge, training, and support, leads to an overwhelming, unacceptable lack of implementation of IEPs in the general education classroom.

Students with disabilities accessing their free and appropriate education are highly dependent upon the implementation of their IEP. The IEP acts as a blueprint for special education services, developed by the student's collaborative team, including the student, parent(s), special education teacher, at least one general education teacher, a representative of the local education agency, and any other professionals that are needed on behalf of the student. It is standard procedure for the IEP to then be consistently implemented in each of the student's classes in the least LRE. This is a difficult task when research has found that general education teachers sometimes lack knowledge of the special education laws (O'Conner, Yasik, & Horner, 2016). This can lead to the violation of the rights of the student and consequently lead to litigation against the school. Additionally, research has found that several general education teachers receive IEPs but fail to read them or implement the accommodations written in them, calling for a need for the document to be more simplified to boost clarity (Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011). Although recent research suggests that general education teachers are somewhat knowledgeable in the laws, they have high levels of self-efficacy to teach students with disabilities (Morgan, 2019).

Sometimes, IEPs are not implemented because general education teachers do not feel they have had sufficient training in the IEP process and components (Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011). According to Morgan (2019), general education teachers believe that they are implementing the IEP because they provided differentiated instruction, which may not be enough according to the law (Morgan, 2019). In general, teachers do not feel prepared to teach in

inclusive classrooms, and this might be due to an increased focus on content knowledge at the expense of pedagogical knowledge (Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011). General education teachers need to focus on methodology and delivery when trying to reach their special education students. Teachers who reported feeling that they have had enough training in special education and teaching students with disabilities have more positive attitudes towards inclusive education (Ahmmed, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2012). It is important to modify and adapt content and curriculum based on the needs of individual students. This cannot be done if the teachers have not had sufficient training in how to reach and teach all students in an inclusive setting.

General education teachers are also faced with a lack of support, which could lead to the failure to implement IEPs in the general education classroom. There is an increased shortage of special education teachers (Sacks & Halder, 2017), leaving fewer special education professionals for general education teachers to collaborate with. General education teachers are sometimes stuck with vacancies in special education positions, or they are sometimes filled with unqualified candidates (Berry et al., 2012). This directly affects the perceived support that the general education teacher feels. And, even when there are special education teachers present, it is difficult for general education teachers to find time outside of class to collaborate with them on top of all of their other responsibilities (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). Without the support of special education teachers and local administration, general education teachers are left to fend for themselves (Fuchs, 2010). If a general education teacher is not confident and does not feel supported by the special education teachers and administrators, they might be less likely to implement the IEP as it is written. General education teachers need constant collaboration with special education teachers and administrators so they feel like they have the tools and resources necessary to provide equitable education in an inclusive environment. Perceived support and collaborative opportunities with special education teachers and administrators are essential for the general education teacher to seamlessly navigate today's inclusive classrooms. As suggested in Morgan's (2019) study, school psychologists are available as a resource to providing instruction to a student with an IEP, but most general education teachers are unaware (Morgan, 2019).

Another factor that directly impacts the quality of implementation in the inclusive classroom is the general educator's attitude towards inclusive education. Vaz et al. (2015), determined that general education teachers' gender, age, training, and self-efficacy has a definite

effect on their willingness to provide special education services in their inclusive classrooms. Recent research has presented differentiated findings when it comes to gender and age. In some cases, gender and age have had a negative effect on teachers' attitudes of inclusion; in other cases, it has not. Consistent, across the board though, is that a general educator's self-efficacy has a direct impact on their attitudes towards inclusion (Vaz et al., 2015; Objakor et al., 2012). Teachers who have higher self-efficacy see themselves as being more confident and able to make the changes necessary to reach all students. These teachers often feel they have been given the training and resources necessary to reach the diverse learners that inhabit their inclusive classrooms these teachers will be more likely to implement the changes needed for students with disabilities. On the contrary, teachers with lower self-efficacy tend to have bad attitudes when it comes to inclusion. This might be due to an insecurity that they do not have the skills necessary to reach all students. In turn, these types of teachers feel that the problem lies with the student because they feel they just do not try hard enough. There is a lack of sense of ownership as the teacher, so they do not feel the need to vary instruction or slow down content delivery (Objakor et al., 2012). Positive self-efficacy likely leads to more positive attitudes towards inclusive education, whereas lower levels of self-efficacy inspire negative attitudes towards inclusion.

Among the wealth of knowledge on inclusive education, there are many holes in the research. There is a gap in secondary education research pertaining to inclusive education and IEP implementation. With content area specialties at the secondary level, there is a gap in research discussing secondary general education teacher's knowledge of pedagogical strategies to reach and teach special education students. Additionally, there are conflicting findings when it comes to age and gender and how that affects a teacher's attitude toward inclusive education. General educators' attitudes on education have a direct effect on the implementation of IEPs, so there needs to be a local assessment of attitudes of inclusion. Recent research calls for a simplified version of the IEP to boost the general education teacher's overall knowledge of (Grskovic & Trzcinka, 2011). To create a simplified version of the IEP and its components, there needs to be research to unearth the specific discrepancies in general educators' knowledge. Based on the findings outlined above, the research questions for this study include:

1. What do general education teachers know and need to know about the IEP and its components?



2. What challenges do general education teachers face when implementing the IEP in the inclusive class setting?
3. What are teachers' attitudes pertaining to inclusive education?

### **Justification of a Handbook**

From the literature review, challenges to IEP implementation were discussed. The challenges were identified and an explanation of why and how those challenges affect general education teachers were discussed. However, the research did not suggest how to overcome the challenges identified in the research. For example, Burns (2001) created a book that outlines philosophical and ethical issues related to Special Education, the history of Special Education laws, how IDEA influenced the school curriculum, clarifying the IEP process, shows appropriate education for making accommodations, providing supports and developing strategies to meet the needs of students with disabilities, an overview of the IEP process, and how-to information on determining a student's present levels. This book provides many positive attributes to the IEP implementation, however, it lacks recent research and is specifically made as a guide to Special Education teachers and not General Education teachers.

Other guides or handbooks were created by Konrad (2008), which focused on involving the student in the IEP process. Another guide was created specifically for General Education teachers by Leader-Janssen et. al (2012). This study provided a guide for General Education teachers to use to determine whom they should reach out to for support or to collaborate with in regards to various issues that they are having with students with disabilities in their classrooms. This article created a table with the Special Education Support person or staff, their role or responsibilities, specific issues they are having with students, and questions they could ask to receive support for that issue. Lastly and more recently, Berenson (2020) found a need to improve the implementation for students with disabilities accommodations for online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This article provided a guide for General and Special education teachers to follow to assist with implementing specific accommodations for students while working online virtually.

As the above examples can be extremely helpful, I wanted to complete a handbook that assisted general education teachers overcome the challenges presented in the literature review by explaining the laws, providing strategies for implementing IEP accommodations in their

classrooms, providing an understanding of the components of the IEP, and a brief overview of the General Education teachers' role in the IEP process; with examples. Due to the limited research and handbooks created for General Education teachers in regards to IEP implementation, there is a need for this specific handbook.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

Prior to conducting this study, I took an online class in human research ethics and passed a certification exam (See Appendix A). This online human research ethics course was with the CITI system. Also before conducting this research, I had to go through the IRB approval process. Before I began the IRB application I, utilized peer-reviewed articles to compile survey questions to support my research. Using a convenient sampling method, I sent an email to a school's principal to get his approval to conduct my research and requested them to send the survey to the teachers, and provided an approved recruitment email with the study information.

Approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained to conduct this research (See Appendix B). This research is considered an Exempt study because it is being conducted in common education settings such as a school. The participants of this study are protected by the HIPAA Privacy Rule and none of their Protected Health Information will be utilized. All guidelines stipulated by the IRB were followed: protecting participants' identity, securely storing data, ensuring confidentiality and privacy of participants, and ensuring voluntary participation. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, research needed to be conducted differently to ensure that safety regulations were being followed. Due to the nature of the pandemic, physical contact with paper surveys can increase the risk of transmitting the disease, and hence surveys were conducted electronically to reduce the risk. At the same time, utilizing a virtual survey in a time where teachers are doing everything electronically, poses additional challenges. In general, teachers constantly receive many emails throughout the day, but during this pandemic, as most communication with colleagues, families, and students is through online channels, the volume of emails daily has greatly increased. This can become very overwhelming and emails that come in may be immediately deleted if it is not important to them at that time, or pushed to the side and not be read. With the high demand of work put on teachers during this difficult time, asking them to volunteer to do one more thing may be too much. Filling out a survey for research may not have been on the top of the teachers to do list at that time, hence a 70% response rate that was received is considered strong (Creswell, 2008).

In order to maintain authenticity, I needed to be aware of my positionality and my background as a researcher, and invariable biases that affect how I conducted and reported my research. I am a special education teacher and I may not be completely cognizant of the demands put on general education teachers, and I may only be focused on the students that they teach with disabilities and making sure that their IEP's are being implemented accordingly. I am also aware that I may assume that the special education paperwork is simple to understand, when in fact a general education teacher may not have had the proper training to completely understand that paperwork. One last bias that I have due to my experiences is that general education teachers do not care to implement the IEP in their classrooms because they do not like teaching in an inclusive setting when it could be that they do not understand that paperwork and have not had the proper training with the implementation in their classrooms.

For this research as the researcher, I attempted to obtain the thoughts and feelings of my teacher participants concerning the challenges that they face when implementing the IEP in their classrooms. My primary responsibility as the researcher was to collect the data and protect the participants and the information that they have provided. As a current secondary, special education teacher, I have witnessed the difficulties with my students with disabilities finding educational success. When collaborating and communicating with my teacher peers, I have witnessed the lack of their IEPs being implemented, which is related to the students' current success.

### **Research Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to determine what general education teachers find to be challenging with implementing the IEP in their classroom of a student with a disability. Possible challenges would include the following: lack of knowledge of the IEP components and the laws protecting them, lack of training, and their attitudes toward inclusion. High school level general education teachers were surveyed to determine what each of them found challenging. This study is a mixed methodology study that includes both qualitative and quantitative research during both the design, implementation, and analysis of the study results. The survey consisted of demographic, scale, and short answer questions that were analyzed and compared like a quantitative study, and feelings and beliefs were assessed and analyzed as in a qualitative study.

The researcher hoped to gain knowledge of the challenges that general education teachers are facing when implementing IEP in their inclusive classrooms.

### **Participants**

The participants of this study consisted of 60 general education teachers at a high school in a Midwestern city, who teach a variety of content areas including Social Studies, English, Science, Math, and Special Area classes, in grades 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>. According to the Department of Education, general education teachers at this high school teach roughly 1,391 students from an urban setting. The school's racial demographics were approximately 31% African American, roughly 18% Caucasian, approximately 33% Hispanic, about seven percent Asian, with nine percent multiracial. This high school's students are over 70% economically disadvantaged, almost 14% English Learners, and tops off at 18% of its student population as having a disability.

The 60 participants consist of 25 males and 35 females. All the full-time educators in this school have the following years of experience: approximately 21% have zero to two years of experience, six and a half percent of them have three to five years, about 23% have six to 10 years, almost 16% have 11 to 15 years, with about 12% having 16 to 20 years, followed with 22% of the educators having 20 plus years of experience. Their local administrators for effectiveness rated all the educators and 98.5% were rated effective and one and a half percent were rated as highly effective.

Of the participants, 14 (37%) were male, 21 (55%) were female, and three (8%) preferred not to disclose said information, see table 1. Of the participants, the majority of them were female. The participants involved in the study have been teaching in a range from two to 38 years. The average number of years teaching is 17 in regards to the 38 participants. The participants currently teach one to 35 students with IEPs, with the average amount of students being 17. Four participants decided not to answer that question. On average, the participants have taken three college courses to teach students with disabilities. However, 92% of the participants have taken six or fewer college courses on teaching students with disabilities, and 8% have taken at least 12-20 courses.

## **Setting**

This research took place at a high school in a suburban city. This high school is an inner-city school and is part of the city's public school district. This high school is one of the oldest running high schools in the city. This study was conducted virtually as teachers were sent surveys via our school email outlet. This high school is one of five traditional public high schools in the city limits. There are four non-traditional high schools within the school district and several private schools in the city.

This high school has been labeled as the "bad school" for many years, however, there is much more to it than the rumors that surround it. News media outlets have reported on activities at the school that has happened, that also happen at other schools, yet they do not report it. This high school is also considered a complex school due to teacher retention rates. As a complex school, teachers are offered extra money to work and stay there, and with that label, teachers have to do extra training in order to get that extra money. The high school students are able to join the International Baccalaureate (IB) program and graduate with diplomas that are internationally recognized. This school is now recognized as a S.T.E.A.M magnet school that focuses on science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math, all while celebrating and embracing diversity.

## **Research Design**

This study was informed by Creswell's (2008) description of a cross-sectional survey design when developed and implemented, which was ideal due to the time constraints of the project. A "cross sectional survey is a design in which the researcher collects data at one point in time" (Creswell, 2008, p. 638). Creswell describes survey research as follows: "Survey research designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population people to describe attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of a population" (Creswell, 2008, p. 388). This type of design will allow the researcher to determine trends within the data that is collected. The cross-sectional survey design was implemented to determine the participants' current attitudes or practices. The point of this study was to identify what general education teachers currently do when implementing the IEP in

their classroom as well as their current attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about the challenges that they face with IEP implementation and inclusion.

### **Data Sources**

The data collected for this study were responses to structured, survey questions. The survey asked general education teachers a series of both open-ended and closed-ended questions that gauged their understanding of the challenges that they face when implementing the IEP in their classrooms. Because the survey was anonymous and individual, teachers were more likely to be open and candid in their responses. The information collected from the survey was analyzed and utilized to create a handbook for general education teachers and the information provided is likely to benefit them with overcoming the challenges that they may face to implement the IEP in their inclusive class settings.

The survey started by asking general education teachers basic demographic questions about their gender, years of experience, how many students they are teaching and have taught with an IEP, as well as the number of college courses and professional learning opportunities they were given to teach students with disabilities. The next portion of the survey included Likert scale questions that they rated from strongly agree to strongly disagree. These questions focused on their self-adequacy or preparation for teaching students with disabilities, whether they feel they received enough training, and support from administration, teachers, and paraeducators, and finally if they are given sufficient enough time to collaborate with special education teachers and the IEP team members.

The next set of questions are open-ended short answer questions. This was an attempt to identify how the general education teachers feel about teaching students with disabilities. The survey asked how they feel about students with disabilities in their classrooms, and if they are aware of the laws that protect them and asks them to provide a description of what they know. The survey questions also gave the teachers the ability to explain what they find to be the biggest challenges that they face with implementing the IEP as well as their concerns or suggestions for it, and recommendations to improve the IEP document. The survey asked general education teachers to describe the support that they receive and what they believe the roles of a special education teacher as well as themselves in the inclusive class setting.

Finally, the survey listed 15 common accommodations and modifications that are found on IEP's. The general education teachers were asked to describe what challenges that they have encountered if any when implementing each of the accommodations or modifications in their classrooms. If they had not implemented those accommodations they were to state as so, if they have not they were to leave a brief description of how they incorporated that into their curriculum. This question is important because it provides strategies for implementation that can be provided in the handbook to assist all general education teachers. (See Appendix A)

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Participants for this study were recruited through the School's district email list. General education teachers were sent an email via the school principal, asking them to participate in the study (See Appendix C). The recruitment email explained briefly what they could expect from the questions that were asked of them. The email explained to the teachers that their participation is completely voluntary and anonymous. The email stated that their responses to the survey were protected and disposed of properly at the end of the study. The researcher's contact information was available if the participants were to have any questions.

In the same recruitment email, the general education teachers were provided with a link to complete the survey. That link took the participants to the University's Qualtrics survey system. From that link, teachers were able to complete the survey and submit it. All of the participants' responses were compiled and analyzed, the data collected was utilized to complete the special project.

Surveys were sent out to all certified general education teachers at the participating high school. This included about sixty surveys and was sent out on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020. When all of the surveys were not received, a reminder email with the survey link was sent out to the remaining participants on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021, which was approximately two-plus weeks after the original recruitment email was sent out.

Once all surveys of those who participated were submitted the responses were analyzed. The information collected from their submissions was grouped by looking at trends and patterns that the teachers had communicated. These patterns and trends were utilized when formulating the special project.



### **Special Project Description**

This special project was created for general education teachers, in the general education class setting, to utilize to successfully implement the IEP for students with disabilities. The final product of this project is a handbook that includes information about the IEP and all of its components, the laws that protect students with disabilities, and strategies to implement the IEP accommodations in their General Education classrooms and the General Education teachers' role in the IEP process. The handbook provides general education teachers a description of common accommodations utilized in IEPs while providing suggestions for teachers to implement them in their classrooms. These suggestions and strategies will focus on assisting general education teachers with lowering their stress and anxiety with the implementation of the IEP. This handbook is aimed at addressing the IEP and making sure that all of the teachers understand all parts that are important for implementing it in an inclusive class setting. This handbook is beneficial to all teachers who work with students with disabilities as well as the students with disabilities, as their IEP will be implemented as it should be.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

### **Introduction**

For this research, it was especially important to get the input of general education teachers as a component of the special project handbook to design a tool that will be beneficial for teachers to use when implementing the IEP in their classrooms. A survey was conducted anonymously and virtually with secondary general education teachers. The survey was important to communicate the difficulties that general education teachers face when implementing the IEP in their classrooms. The general education teachers were asked questions regarding what they perceive as the problems that they face with the implementation of the IEP. It also asked them questions regarding their attitudes toward inclusion, their knowledge of the IEP, perception of the adequacy of their training, support, preparedness, and time for collaboration. Since general education teachers at the secondary level are most likely responsible for implementing the IEP it was important to ask their input to make the IEP document more beneficial to them. This project was created for general education teachers to utilize as a reference for implementing the IEP in their inclusive classrooms. This handbook explains the laws that protect students with disabilities, and strategies for implementing the IEP related to the challenges the general education teachers expressed in their surveys.

The purpose of this study was to identify the general education teachers' knowledge about the laws that protect students with disabilities, in particular the IEP and its components, and the challenges that they face implementing the IEP in their classrooms. This study also identified the general education teacher's beliefs of the IEP and the implementation of it. The following research questions were created in to outline the findings of the literature review and create the survey.

1. What do general education teachers know and need to know about the IEP and its components?
2. What challenges do general education teachers face when implementing the IEP in the inclusive class setting?
3. What are teachers' attitudes pertaining to inclusive education?

## **Survey**

The survey consisted of three different sections. The first section of the survey was demographic questions. These questions asked about prior training, gender, the number of years teaching, and how many students they teach with disabilities. The second section of the survey was scale questions to determine the general education teachers' preparedness to teach students with disabilities, and if they feel that they receive adequate training, support, and collaboration time to teach students with disabilities. The final section of the survey consisted of short answer qualitative questions. These questions allowed for the general education teacher to identify what they know about the IEP, the specific challenges that they face when implementing the IEP, how they feel about students with disabilities being in their classroom, what accommodations they use, and any suggestions that they may have to assist them with reducing those challenges. These survey questions are important to the handbook, by identifying specific challenges and provide a resource to overcome those challenges.

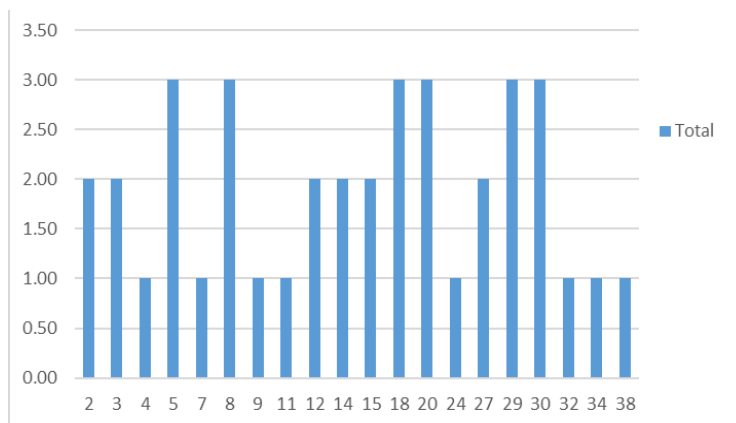
The survey results indicated that these are the main challenges: lack of support, lack of collaboration time, limited resources, challenges with providing accommodations, and knowledge of the IEP. These common themes were identified by looking at the quantitative and qualitative data analyzed from the survey. These themes assist in answering this study's research questions. This study confirmed the findings in the literature review that General Education teachers need to know about the IEP and its components. Although the teachers who completed the survey express more positive attitudes toward inclusions, the literature suggests that the more challenges they face the more negative attitudes they have toward inclusion.

### **Demographic Information**

Out of 60 surveys distributed, 42 teachers participated. Of those 42 participants, four surveys were incomplete and not utilized. The four incomplete surveys only completed the demographic questions and thus were not utilized. There were 38 general education teachers that completed the survey in its entirety, which is a 63% return rate. The participants in the study were licensed, general education teachers. The participants all teach general education classes from a variety of content areas from ninth through twelfth grade. Some of the teachers who participated in this survey teach integrated classes that include a second adult, which would be a

special education teacher or a paraprofessional. These individuals work in a co-teaching environment, while others are considered elective courses and do not have a second adult in the room. The integrated class setting is to be beneficial to students with disabilities in content area classes to support them and their needs.

As indicated in the participant section of the Methodology chapter three demographic factors play a very significant role in my study. First is the number of years of experience (average = 17yrs), second is the number of students they have taught with IEPs (1-35 students), and third the amount of college courses they have taken (six or less). See Figure 1, and Tables 1 and 2. The final demographic question identified how many professional learning (PL) sessions to teach students with disabilities were provided to the participants from their school or district. On average the participants were provided with five PL's in regards to teaching students with disabilities. However, 84% of the participants were provided with six or fewer PL's from their school or district. 16% of those participants were provided with ten to twenty-five PL's.



*Figure 1. Participants by Years Teaching*

*Table 1. Participants Gender*

Gender	Participants	Percentage
Male	14	37%
Female	21	55%
Prefer not to say	3	8%

Table 2. Participants Gender

Number of Trainings	College Courses	District PLs
6 or Less	92%	84%
10-25	8%	16%

### **Prior Knowledge of Special Education Laws**

Participants were asked if they were aware of the laws that protect students with disabilities and if they could provide a brief description of them. Of the 38 participants, 35 answered this question. Only 17% of the participants could name a specific federal law, which included IDEA and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The participants that expressed that they could not name, or even explain what was included in the Special Education laws was 37% of the participants. Of the participants, 46% of them could not name a law but understood that the IEP was a legal document that outlined services provided to students. Prior studies conducted differed from the current study. In the study conducted by O'Connor, Yasik, and Horner (2016) there were more participants with a knowledge of the Special Education laws than those of this study. Of these responses FAPE was mentioned four times, LRE was mentioned seven times, and the state's interpretation of IDEA was mentioned 6 times. Most of the participants had a basic understanding that services provided to students with disabilities should include accommodations and modifications to the current curriculum, which need to be provided to the students in their least restrictive environment. One participant stated "I know that they are to have the "least restrictive environment" which, to be honest, becomes the MOST restrictive environment for non-SpEd kids". This same participant believes that the laws become blurry when the special education label is full of a lot of different entities. This specific teacher believes that the LRE can seem more restrictive for a student with a disability more times than not. With thirty-four years of teaching experience, she has only been provided with two PL's and completed one Special Education course in her undergraduate studies. With limited training, she still feels supported and prepared to teach students with disabilities even with not receiving adequate training and time for collaboration.

In conclusion, nearly half of the total number of participants were unaware of the terminology in the Special Education law. Although they recognize the name of some of the laws, they were unable to provide specific information regarding these laws. Despite the number

of years that the teachers have been employed there was a dearth of ongoing professional development.

### **Overall Challenges**

Questions 7, 8, 9, and 10 were asked to gain an understanding of how much they agree or disagree with how prepared they feel with teaching students with disabilities, if they feel they have received adequate training to understand the IEP and its components, if they feel they receive an adequate amount of time to collaborate with special education teachers, and if they feel they receive an adequate amount of support from special education teachers, paraeducators, and school administration staff. Teachers were asked to respond to the following statements with 5: Strongly Agree, 4: Agree, 3: Neither agree nor disagree, 2: Disagree, or 1: Strongly Disagree. All thirty-eight participants answered the four scale questions on the survey.

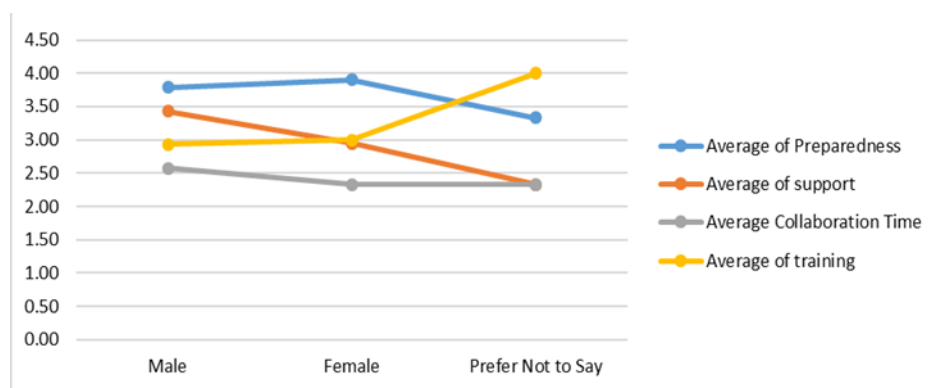
In response to Question 7, “Most days, I am prepared to teach students with disabilities in my general education class”, on average, the teachers feel that they feel prepared to teach students with disabilities in their general education class. With 61% of the participants agreeing with this statement, 21% neither agree nor disagree, 13% strongly agree, and 5% not feeling prepared to teach students with disabilities.

For Question 8, “I am given adequate training and resources to understand the IEP and its components”, 34% of the participants do not feel that they receive enough training to understand the IEP, 24% agree, 24% neither agree nor disagree, 13% strongly agree that they do receive adequate training, while 5% strongly disagree.

Question 9 stated, “I am given adequate time to collaborate with Special Education Teachers”. More than half of the participants, with 53% disagree with given adequate time to collaborate with special education teachers. Of those participants, 16% agree, 16% neither agree nor disagree, 13% strongly disagree, and 2% strongly agree.

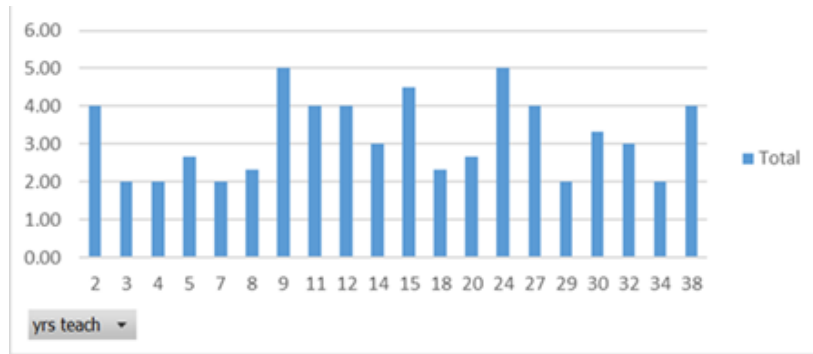
Finally for question 10, “I feel that I get adequate support to teach students with disabilities from Special Education teachers, Paraeducators (assistants), and my school administrative staff”, 34% of the participants agree that they receive an adequate amount of support, 32% disagree, 26% neither agreed nor disagree, 5% strongly agree, and 3% strongly disagree with the previous statement in question 10.

Figure 2 indicates how the teachers responded to the survey's scale questions 7, 8, 9, and 10 by gender. On average all teachers feel mostly prepared to teach students with disabilities, but female teachers tend to feel more prepared than male teachers or those who prefer not to say. When looking at support, male teachers tend to feel like they receive significantly more support than female teachers, which is the same trend for those who did not prefer to say. On average, teachers feel that they agree nor disagree with receiving an adequate amount of training in the IEP. There is a slight difference between males and females, but those who preferred not to disclose their gender on average agree. On average, teachers do not feel that they receive an adequate amount of time to collaborate with special education teachers. There is a slight difference in the graph, where men feel like they get just a bit more time to collaborate than the others.



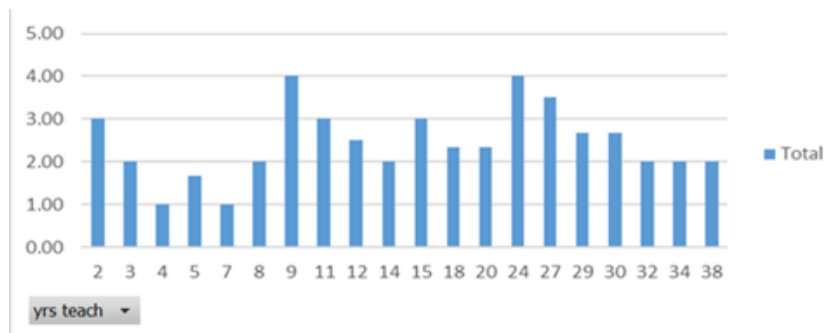
*Figure 2. Adequacy of Training, Collaboration Time, Support and Preparedness by Gender*

Figure 3 shows how the teachers who completed the survey perceive the adequacy of the training that they have received to understand the IEP and its components based on the number of years that they have been teaching. The graph follows the same scale questions as previously mentioned and shows us that their perception of adequate training varies across different years of experience.



*Figure 3. Adequacy of Training*

Figure 4 shows how teachers perceive the adequacy of collaboration time based on the number of years that they have taught. This graph shows that no matter the number of years the teachers have taught, they feel that there is not enough time to collaborate with special education teachers.



*Figure 4. Adequacy of Collaboration Time*

Figure 5 shows how teachers perceive the adequacy of the support they may or may not receive to teach students with disabilities based on the number of years they have been teaching. The graph shows that it does not matter the number of years a teacher has taught, that support continues to vary.



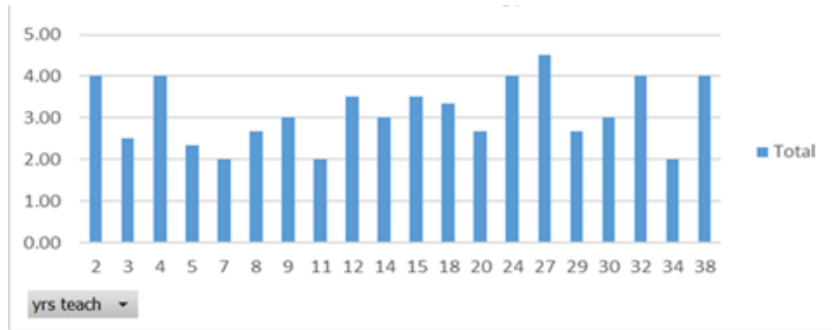


Figure 5. Adequacy of Support

A majority of the teachers (74%) reported that they feel prepared to teach students with disabilities, no matter their experience, gender, or how many students they currently teach that have IEP's. However, by looking at Figure 6 it is evident that teachers have received an adequate amount of training when they are given the opportunity for Professional Learning seminars provided by their school districts.

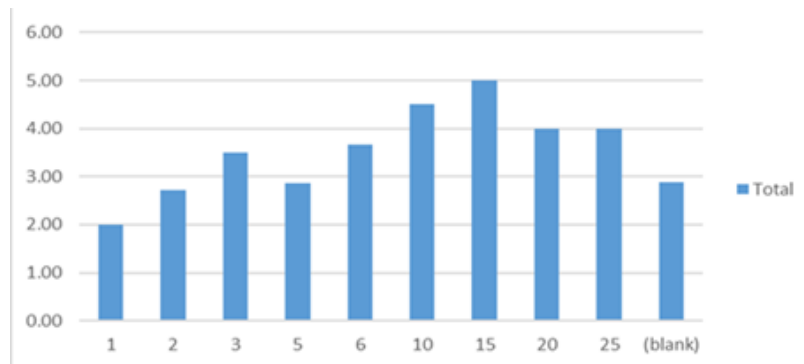
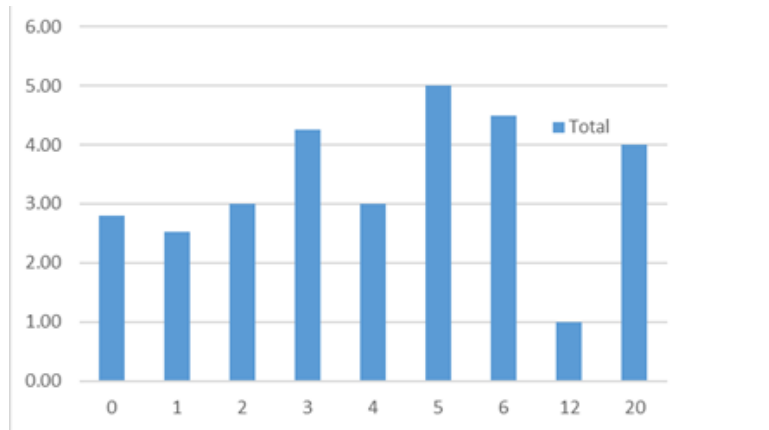


Figure 6. Training by PLs

When looking at Figure 7 teachers it is evident they have received an adequate amount of training on IEPs and their components when they have taken a few or more Special Education courses in college.



*Figure 7. Training Adequacy*

In conclusion, more than half of the teachers feel prepared to teach students with disabilities, but do not feel that they have enough time for collaboration. Nearly half do not feel they receive an adequate amount of training or resources, but yet feel supported by Special Education Teachers, Paraeducators, and administrative staff. Despite limited resources and time for collaboration, teachers tend to feel supported. Additionally, teachers also feel adequate to teach students with disabilities despite these challenges.

### **Teachers Challenges**

For question 13 teachers were asked, “What do you think that the biggest challenge is with implementing the IEP in your classroom?” 36 of the 38 participants responded to this question on the survey. Some common reoccurring themes discuss the IEP paperwork, virtual learning, class size, time constraints, limited resources, and providing modifications and accommodations. The responses to these survey questions provided qualitative responses. One participant stated, “Perhaps the biggest hurdle is the number of students with IEPs – being able to manage all of those and meet the needs of every student is a real challenge.” Of the participants who took a similar stance, 50% were female, 30% were male, and 20% preferred not to disclose their gender. Of those participants, only one was male who said that he lacks preparedness to teach students with disabilities.

Responses to the IEP document itself were brought up roughly nine times within the survey question responses. These responses discussed the IEP document being too wordy or lengthy. For example, one teacher states, “The IEP paperwork in itself is daunting. Being able to

quickly read an IEP and determine what the needs of the student are is something that takes time and practice. Teachers could absolutely benefit from having PL opportunities geared toward helping them understand what is in an IEP and how that's relevant to what they do in the classroom." Of the participants who expressed the challenges with the IEP document itself, 44% of them were female, 33% male, and 23% of the participants preferred not to say. Another teacher stated, "The IEP tells you nothing specific."

Of the 38 participants, 34% of the teachers expressed challenges with implementing the students' accommodations in their classrooms. One teacher states, "The largest challenge would be having the time to read and remember all of the different accommodations needed for each student....I wish there was a way to make a spreadsheet ...Unfortunately, some accommodations slip through the cracks". Another teacher wrote, "Sometimes the accommodations can feel unrealistic." Many of the teachers expressed that they have difficulties remembering which student gets which accommodation. Surprisingly, of the participants who expressed their challenges with the accommodations, 54% were male, and 46% were female. Of the reoccurring themes with teachers' challenges females more frequently reported those challenges except for accommodations. Of those challenges, male teachers seem to have more challenges with implementing the IEP accommodations more than females. When comparing the study conducted by Vaz et al. (2015) which stated that female teachers tend to be more tolerant of inclusion and open to utilizing different teaching strategies than those of men which could account for men expressing that they have had more challenges with implementing the accommodations. Due to the challenge with implementing the IEP accommodations, one teacher states that "getting the student to ask for the accommodation to which they are entitled". Implying that teaching the students self-advocacy skills of their accommodations would be beneficial.

Of the participants, 14 (37%) of them mentioned class sizes and the number of students with IEP's in their classrooms throughout the day as a major challenge. The majority of the participants that expressed this as a challenge were female (57%). One teacher states "if 18/30 students in the class require small group testing, I don't know how to accomplish that in a realistic time frame with only two adults in the room". These teachers find that when they are overloaded with the amount of IEP's that they need to review and students they need to provide accommodations for is extremely challenging with the limited time and resources that they have.

Roughly 11 of the survey responses expressed time as a huge challenge. Time to read, time to implement, and time to plan are found as a trend. One teacher state, “it would be helpful to have more time in the beginning of the year to work with special ed. Teachers to review IEP’s for students in our classes”. Another teacher states, “There doesn’t seem to be enough time in a day, or enough aids to provide the one-on-one support required”. With an inefficient amount of time to reach a large number of students with disabilities, these teachers are having a difficult time making sure that the support is given to the students who need them.

Limited resources was another common theme found in the responses to this survey question has to do with limited resources. Teachers find that developing good co-teaching relationships, assistants, and paraprofessionals have been difficult. One participant who has been teaching for nine years stated “I have had several co-teachers or assistants that have rotated through my room, but it’s hard to find someone consistent who is able to be involved directly in planning and implementing lesson plans and providing extra support”. Other participants who seem to have the same challenges expressed that it is difficult to implement the IEP accommodations because of limited time, resources, and class size. These resources are also limited and one participant expressed their frustration with limited resources by saying, “The opportunity for small group and hands-on work is extremely limited.”

As a result of these survey questions, it can be concluded that teachers express many different types of challenges. These challenges often pertain to the implementation of the IEP accommodations in their classrooms and how the class size, lack of time and resources, lack of training make implementing the IEP accommodations nearly impossible. These teachers find that the IEP document itself is too much which can lead to negative attitudes about them and teachers not taking the time, that they already have limited, and not reading them. Thus causing possible legal issues. Despite these challenges teachers still feel adequate to teach students with disabilities, which others could question as it seems the IEP is not being implemented in the General Education setting per their survey responses.

### **Attitudes**

For question 11 participants were asked, “In your opinion, how do you feel about students with disabilities being in your general education classes?” Of the 38 participants, two did not answer this question providing a 95% response rate for this question. Of those responses,

20 were female (56%), 13 male (36%), and three preferred not to disclose their gender (8%). The majority of the responses were positive attitudes toward inclusion (58%), many were both positive and negative (33%), and only three responses were completely negative attitudes (8%).

The participants that had positive attitudes toward inclusion expressed that it is good for students with disabilities to be taught with their non-disabled peers. A few participants expressed that it was important for both special and general education students, because they can learn from each other. One female participant with two years of teaching experience and only one Special Education course taken states, “while it takes more time to go over material it allows for multiple perspectives and pushes my teaching to focus on different and more comprehensive methods to teach”. One male participant who has been teaching for five years and has only had training provided to them through district PLs states, “I enjoy having a student with disabilities in my general education classes. I think it makes the class more interesting and a more accurate representation of the world we live in.” Of those participants with positive attitudes toward inclusion believe that students with disabilities should have the same opportunity to learn with supports provided to them to be successful. Another male participant who has been teaching for 14 years, has taken three Special Education Courses and has been provided with two district PLs, thinks that inclusion is important by stating “When we discuss equity and not equality students need to be in the classroom with other gen ed. students”.

The participants with fully negative attitudes toward inclusion express their frustrations for a few different reasons. One discussed the fairness with accommodations. This participant expressed the difficulties with allowing a student with a disability the use a calculator, while students without disabilities not being allowed the use of one. Another participant who is male with 30 years of experience, and has had no training on teaching students with disabilities stated “Most students are very capable to complete work assignments, however; many use their disability as a crutch to get out of completing work. There are some who should not be in general education because they read at a very low level.” One female participant with 34 years of teaching experience expressed that she loves teaching all kids, but the dynamic of the classroom can change if the student has a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) on their IEP. This participant states “when I’ve had multiple in a class with BIPs, for example, it’s like diffusing bombs every day.”

Several participants' responses to this question leaned towards both negative and positive, stating that if the student is truly in their least restrictive environment it can be a great learning experience, but the inclusive classroom can be full of many distractions. One male participant expressed some negative attitudes toward inclusion if the student does not advocate for themselves stating, "In most cases, they recognize their situation and advocate for themselves. However, there are some cases where student frustration causes a shutdown. That is difficult." One female participant who has taught for 18 years states, "Great they belong there. However, remote learning has severely hampered the success of my students with disabilities, disproportionately to the gen. ed. Students". Another female participant with four years of experience with only one Special Education course taken and two district PLs provided insight, stating, "I experience pros and cons to having students with disabilities in my gen-ed classes. It really depends on how severe the disability and how the student is coping with it. I believe there is great progress made when a sped student is integrated into a gen-ed classroom provided they are willing to work with me and communicate with me." Many feel that they enjoy teaching students with disabilities, but the number of students with disabilities that they need to teach throughout the day can be extremely overwhelming. One male participant who has no extra training and only three years of experience states, "I feel it is important they get the same level of education as their peers; however, integrated classes may take away from time needed to devote to them." Table 3 shows a visual representation of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion by gender.

*Table 3. Neg/ Pos Attitudes by Gender*

	<i>Gender Specific Responses</i>		<i>Total Response</i>
Female: 20	Positive: 12	60%	33%
	Negative: 1	5%	3%
	Both: 7	35%	19%
Male: 13	Positive: 7	54%	19%
	Negative: 2	15%	6%
	Both: 4	31%	11%
Prefer Not to Say: 3	Positive: 2	67%	6%
	Negative: 0	0%	0%
	Both: 1	1%	3%
95% of participants answered this question			

From this data, it is determined that more than half of the participants have positive attitudes toward inclusion and teaching students with disabilities. Nearly half of the participants portrayed negative attitudes toward inclusions with some having both negative and positive attitudes toward inclusion. Studies show that facing the challenges discussed by these teachers causes negative attitudes toward inclusion, yet the teachers who expressed these challenges also expressed more positive attitudes.

### Common IEP Accommodations

Participants were asked, “In regards to common IEP accommodations listed below, what challenges (if any) do you have in implementing them in your classroom?” The participants were asked to check from the list of accommodations given to them of those they find challenging to implement, then were asked to give a narrative about why they may be challenging. Of the thirty-eight participants, only twenty-seven (71%) answered this question. Table 4 provides a brief overview of the accommodations and the percentage of teachers who find them challenging.

*Table 4. Challenging Accommodations*

Accommodations	# of Participants	% of Participants out of 27
Preferential Seating	12	44
Extended Time	16	59
Use of Graphic Organizer	6	22
Small Group Testing	14	52
Simplified Text Material	11	41
Modified Curriculum	8	30
Reduce # or Problems	10	37
Chunk Tasks	10	37
Copy of Notes	11	41
Visual Aids/Models	6	22
Use of a Calculator	8	30
Verbal Responses	10	37
Modified Tests	11	41
Eliminate 1 Multiple Choice	7	26
Text to Speech	8	30

Many of the challenges with implementing these accommodations follow the trend previously stated above. The trends such as lack of resources, time, and of course the class size (number of students with an IEP) continue to be a problem. Another common theme that presented itself in this question specifically is the challenge with students without IEPs finding out about the others accommodations and getting upset that they too do not get them. Many participants continued to express their challenges, but specifically toward the IEP accommodations. For example, one female participant who has taught for 20 years said “The only issue I have had with any of the above is not having the space, the time, and not having the assistance to implement them.” This particular participant has taken four Special Education courses in college and has been provided with two PLs provided by their district, but still feels that she does not have an appropriate amount of training. Another female participant who has only taught for three years and does not feel that she is prepared to teach students with disabilities stated, “Being only one teacher in a classroom, I cannot offer small group testing or reading of the test. I feel that this would benefit my students, but with COVID, it is difficult to do this.” A third participant who chose not to disclose their gender focused more on behavior and took a negative approach to the IEP accommodations stating, “None of these accommodations address the root cause of behavior issues. Very few students benefit from these types of educational modifications.” This particular participant has been teaching for five years, had taken only one Special Education course in college, but believes that they are receiving an inadequate amount of time to collaborate with Special Education teacher.

Another participant expressed their frustration with the IEP and its components not being easily accessible. A female participant who has been teaching for thirty-four years does not feel like she has had enough training or support but feels prepared to teach students with disabilities said, “If I have a large class (normally do), this is impossible. Almost all of it. And we are not fed this info! We have to go hunt for it. In a digital environment, this has all but gone out the window. I don’t know when they want one of these, usually. Awareness and obligations to a large class are the biggest obstacles.” One participant went above and beyond with answering this specific survey question and discussed the positives and negatives with each of the presented accommodations. This participant is a female teacher with twenty-nine years of teaching experience. The trainings that she received on teaching students with disabilities were one Special Education course and one PL provided by her district. When asked the question about



her preparedness to teach students with disabilities, she replied with neither agree nor disagree. However, she does not feel she has received enough training or support to teach students with disabilities. There are some accommodations such as graphic organizers, chunking tasks, eliminating one answer choice on multiple-choice questions, and extended time she allows to all of her students. However, some accommodations she finds more challenging such as small group testing, simplifying text material, modified curriculum/tests/quizzes, reducing the number of problems, provide a copy of the notes, and allowing verbal responses. This participant finds many of her challenges with these accommodations as she finds that students without disabilities may get upset. Stating “it is difficult keeping the gen-ed kids from finding out and wanting the modified text also....I have tried to do this for certain students, but it’s difficult to have them out without the other students realizing that some are getting different tests.” Other challenges that this participant battles with is the change in curriculum and limiting the number of problems or type of responses. She states “I don’t want to reduce the number of specific type of question and make it more difficult for the student to master the skill” or “my only challenge with this is that I worry the student is missing out on learning the information during the note-taking process.” Many of these challenges when it comes to accommodating the IEP comes with understanding what it might look like to implement these accommodations.

### **Recommendations to Improve the IEP**

Another participant expressed their frustration with the IEP and its components not being easily accessible. A female participant who has been teaching for thirty-four years does not feel like she has had enough training or support but feels prepared to teach students with disabilities said, “If I have a large class (normally do), this is impossible. Almost all of it. And we are not fed this info! We have to go hunt for it. In a digital environment, this has all but gone out the window. I don’t know when they want one of these, usually. Awareness and obligations to a large class are the biggest obstacles.” One participant went above and beyond with answering this specific survey question and discussed the positives and negatives with each of the presented accommodations. This participant is a female teacher with twenty-nine years of teaching experience. The trainings that she received on teaching students with disabilities were one Special Education course and one PL provided by her district. When asked the question about her preparedness to teach students with disabilities, she replied with neither agree nor disagree.

However, she does not feel she has received enough training or support to teach students with disabilities. There are some accommodations such as graphic organizers, chunking tasks, eliminating one answer choice on multiple-choice questions, and extended time she allows to all of her students. However, some accommodations she finds more challenging such as small group testing, simplifying text material, modified curriculum/tests/quizzes, reducing the number of problems, provide a copy of the notes, and allowing verbal responses. This participant finds many of her challenges with these accommodations as she finds that students without disabilities may get upset. Stating “it is difficult keeping the gen-ed kids from finding out and wanting the modified text also...I have tried to do this for certain students, but it’s difficult to have them out without the other students realizing that some are getting different tests.” Other challenges that this participant battles with is the change in curriculum and limiting the number of problems or type of responses. She states “I don’t want to reduce the number of specific type of question and make it more difficult for the student to master the skill” or “my only challenge with this is that I worry the student is missing out on learning the information during the note-taking process.” Many of these challenges when it comes to accommodating the IEP comes with understanding what it might look like to implement these accommodations.

### **Summary of the Results**

In conclusion, the participants have limited knowledge of Special Education Laws, the IEP, and its components. The participants of this study face many challenges when implementing the IEP in their classrooms. Time constraints put on teachers and limited time for collaboration make it difficult to implement the IEP. Teachers find that with large class sizes and limited resources, and special education, paraprofessional, and assistant shortages limit the resources that provide support to students with disabilities. Due to COVID-19 and the push for virtual learning has affected many, these participants have seen these effects specifically with the special education student population. Which is comparable to a recent study conducted about education and COVID 19 which states that students with disabilities “are especially vulnerable to regression when services are removed, reduced, or modified” (Fredrick, Raabe, Rogers, and Pizzica, 2020, p.1). These participants expressed their challenges with implementation because of the lack of training and support that they are provided. These participants’ attitudes toward

inclusion tend to be more positive, but the findings determine that the challenges that they encounter with implementation cause more negative attitudes.

The findings show that the participants have the same challenges with IEP implementation that they find also when providing accommodations in their classrooms. However, when asked to provide recommendations to the IEP very few teachers provided information on how they would like to IEP document look to better serve their needs as the teachers implementing it. When this survey was designed, I had hoped to identify those challenges that teachers face with implementing the IEP in their classrooms, what I found met my expectations. The challenges that I have personally seen, were spot on to the challenges that the participants expressed that they had. Many negative comments displayed negative attitudes toward inclusion, but that did not coincide with how they expressed they felt with students with disabilities in their classrooms. These two things tended to contradict one another amongst the survey responses. I was surprised to see that many teachers were forthcoming with their challenges, but had little to no solutions to give for those problems.

The limitations for the results regarding the methodology of the research are in part due to the sample size. The current study was only conducted utilizing one school for the sample size. Preferably, the results of the survey would be a more accurate depiction of all challenges that teachers face if the survey was given to multiple different schools in various geographic locations. Furthermore, some of the participants not responding to certain questions weaken the responses to the survey questions.

The findings of this study closely confirm with themes in the literature review. Based on themes from the results of the survey the researcher perceived a need for creating a handy resource for teachers to equip them with the knowledge of specific terminology in the laws that govern the education of their students with an IEP; to serve as a resource for professional development; and aim to bring about attitudinal changes based on their updated knowledge that this handbook has the potential to provide.

## CHAPTER 5: HANDBOOK

# The Ultimate Guide to IEP Implementation in YOUR Classroom



A Handbook That You Can Use When You Are In A Rut  
And You Do Not Know What To Do

## Table of Contents

<b>About the Author</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Disclaimer</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Section 1: All About the Laws</b>	<b>64</b>
Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act	65
Section 504	66
What to Know in Your State	67
<b>Section 2: IEP Breakdown</b>	<b>68</b>
What Is an IEP?	68
Important IEP Components	68 - 60
Why are they Important?	70
<b>Section 3: How to Guide to Accommodations</b>	<b>71</b>
What to Do?	71 - 77
Who Can Support Me?	77
<b>Section 4: Your Role in the IEP Process</b>	<b>78</b>
Who	78
What	79
When	79
How: Providing Appropriate Present Level Info	80 - 82
Why	83
<b>Accommodations Cheat Sheet</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Possible Website Resources</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Thank You</b>	<b>86</b>

## About the Author

I graduated from Indiana Purdue University Fort Wayne with a Bachelor of General Studies, with a minor in Psychology, and in Human Services in May of 2014. After graduating with my Bachelors I found myself working for a non-profit organization teaching children and adult's skills to cope with their mental health and relational difficulties. In this position I was given the opportunity to work with



students at the secondary education level in a Special Education setting, and provide services to them at their school. I began working with these teenagers and developed a passion for helping them grow, not only socially, but also academically. Although, I was only there to help them build their social skills and cope with their negative emotions I found myself teaching them educational skills as well. After working with these students I realized that this is where I wanted and needed to be. I enjoyed working with the students and other school employees together, to build a community. I decided to continue my education to obtain a Master of Science in Education with a major in Special Education beginning in January 2019 and graduating May 2021. After starting my new educational journey, I began applying to special education teacher positions in the summer of 2019. I was offered several interviews, but something called me to applying for a position at my Alma Mater. I knew that the population of my old High School needed a Special Education teacher who cared about the students and wanted them to succeed. I am currently on my second year of teaching and I would not change it for the world.

I am a single mother of two beautiful children, ages 10, and 7. Being a Special Education teacher, mother, and a student has come with its many challenges, but I am glad that I have taken on this journey. My children have the ability to see me grow, and will have the opportunity to see hard work pay off.

Amy R. Groh

## Disclaimer

Before we start, I want you to understand that this handbook was created specifically for the school that the research was conducted in. The challenges that the teachers expressed were combined to identify their needs, then placed in this handbook to guide them through these challenges. Before reading this handbook, are you willing to take the steps it takes to teaching students with disabilities? If so, I commend you for your patience, and persistence to doing what is necessary for your students with disabilities to be successful in the general education class setting.

This handbook was created for teachers to use as a reference to overcome the challenges that they face with implementing the IEP in their classrooms. The handbook is divided into different sections; all about the laws, breaking down the IEP, accommodation implementation, roles in the IEP process, and different resources. This handbook suggests how general education teachers can provide the necessary accommodations to students with IEPs in their classrooms. The handbook does this by providing my own personal interpretation of how the accommodation should look in your classroom, as well as input from other Special Education and General Education teachers.

# Section 1: All about the Laws



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**All students who receive special education services are protected under federal law. Due to a student's disability they may have special needs that need to be met. This is the difference between equality, and equity. Special Education services allow for students to develop and define skills not only related to academics, but include personal skills to assist them with becoming self-reliant citizens.**

## What Laws to Know!

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA)
  - Section 504



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# IDEIA

## What is IDEIA?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act is a federal law put in place for eligible children ages 3 to 21 that guarantees their right to free appropriate public education that is tailored to their needs.



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## What does it include?

- Individualized Education Plan or Program (IEP)
  - Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
  - Appropriate Evaluation

## What does this mean for you?

**IEP:** A document created with input from **ALL** teachers to determine the needs of the student. Is the student making progress? What Unique needs do they need?

**LRE:** This is the general education class setting. Since students with disabilities are required to be in their LRE, classroom modifications and accommodations **ARE REQUIRED!**

**FAPE:** Students with disabilities are entitled to the special education and related services unique to them to be successful. These are things that will prepare them when furthering their education, employment and independent living.

**Appropriate Evaluation:** If you feel there is a student that you suspect as having a disability, speak up.

# Section 504

## What is Section 504?

Section 504 is part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This federal law protects those with disabilities by allowing them to fully participate in areas such as work places and education. Those who are protected include people with mental and physical impairments. This law protects all students with IEPs.



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## What does it include?

- 504 Plan
- Prohibits Discrimination

## What does this mean for you?

- The purpose of this law is to prohibit discrimination
- This applies to all public schools, and most colleges. IEPs stop after 12<sup>th</sup> grade and 504 Plan often begins
- 504 Plan is not individualized, but expects changes to the learning environment to occur

# What to Know in Your State

All students who receive Special Education services are protected under federal laws. These federal laws provide a blue print for what ALL states are required to do to meet the needs of students with disabilities. States are allowed to interpret this law and create their own laws in accordance with the federal laws. States can provide more to students with disabilities, but never less than what they are required to do. For example see article 7.

## The Difference between State and Federal Laws

FEDERAL	STATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Students who have a disability may qualify for services classified under 13 different categories</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Must follow IDEA, but which disability they qualify may differ</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Students must be provided with FAPE for all students with a disability in the LRE</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Must provide FAPE, but states can decide what is considered appropriate and what their LRE looks like</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>IEP process is laid out in steps and given to the parent or guardian</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>States must follow the IDEIA IEP process, but can create their own time limits</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Provides early intervention</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>States can determine what a delay is to provide early intervention</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Services are provided until the age of 21</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>States can chose to limit or extend the age that is ok to provide services</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>After High School transition plan begins at the age of 16</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>State can begin transition planning at an earlier age</li></ul>

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# Section 2: IEP Breakdown

## What is an IEP?

**An IEP is more than a written legal document. The IEP is a map that lays out the special education instruction, supports, and services that students need to make progress with the general education curriculum. Each IEP is tailored to the individual student's needs, based on full evaluation results, and allows the families to be involved in decisions that impact their child's education. Below you will find components that should drive your instruction.**

## Important IEP Components

**Present Levels:** LOOK HERE for students' academic difficulties, which should include...

- **Statement of Disability:** Explains how the students' disability affects their participation in the general education setting
- **Academic Achievement:** Strengths and weaknesses of the student in each of their classes
- **Functional Performance:** This includes what how the student performs socially, emotionally, physically, and communicatively

**Goals:** LOOK HERE for academic and social goals students should be working toward, and note that...

- Goals are geared toward academics such as: Writing, Reading, & Math, and sometimes social deficits
- Based on present levels of performance
- **Special Education teachers will call on you to provide data that monitors the students' progress toward achieving their goals**



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**Accommodations:** Crucial section for IEP implementation! Here you will find the expectations placed on you, which include...

- Familiarize yourself with students' accommodations to provide adjustments to the environment and the curriculum
- Familiarize yourself with what equipment that should be provided to student for success
- **REMEMBER... Students' have the legal right to the accommodations written in their IEP**
- Refusing to provide these is a form of discrimination



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**Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP):** The BIP is a written plan that acts as a guide to prevent negative behavior, which includes...

- Problem behaviors: what they are, and why they occur
- Strategies to help teach good behaviors
- Supports to help with the negative behavior
- Possible rewards for good behaviors



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## Why are they important?

**Familiarizing yourself with these four sections (present levels, goals, BIP, and accommodations) is vital to your success of teaching students with disabilities in your general education classroom. A comprehensive understanding of these four sections of the IEP will provide the groundwork for providing equitable education in the least restrictive environment.**

Present Levels	Goals	Accommodations	BIP
Gives you background information so you are aware of students' strengths and weaknesses	Tells you what the student should be working to accomplish for the year	Tells you what changes you should be making to the environment and content for you students to be successful	Provides you strategies to deal with negative behaviors
Without your effort, the IEP team cannot accurately monitor the student's progress.			Outlines a students' negative behaviors



## Section 3: How to Guide to Accommodations



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**Implementing accommodations in your general education inclusive classroom can be difficult, even more so in the digital age as we all have been impacted by COVID-19. This is where this handbook can really be useful. In this section you will find common accommodations, and strategies for their implementation. Always remember that these are just suggestions, and you may find a way that works best for you and your students, but if you do not know what to, this is for you!**

### What to do...

#### Extended time

For most students this means time and a half to complete tests, and assignments. For some English Language Learners (ELL) who also have a disability, this is double time.

- 1 day = 2 days
- 3 days = 5 days
- 50 mins = 1 hr and 15 mins
- Points are not reduced during this time
- Make yourself a note of who receives extended time
- Create separate assignments, tests/quizzes on your Learning Management System (LMS) if you plan on locking them out
- Utilize your co-teacher or assistant to help you manage these times
- Make a note on your assignments of extended time due dates

## Modified Assignments and Tests

These are changes to assignments, tests, and quizzes that will help a student with a learning disability find success with the general education curriculum.

- Eliminate at least 1 multiple choice option
- Provide a word bank for fill in the blank
- Reduce the expected amount of sentences in a short answer response
- Reduce the expected amount of paragraphs required in an essay/ paper
- Reduce the amount of problems/ questions on assignments and or tests



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## Tests Read Aloud

This accommodation is the reading of the questions and answer options on a test or quiz.

- Have a co-teacher or assistant read the test questions and answer options (if multiple choice) out loud to the student. Mostly given in a separate room
- Utilize a text to speech software and give students headphones. A free service can be found at [naturalreader.com](http://naturalreader.com)

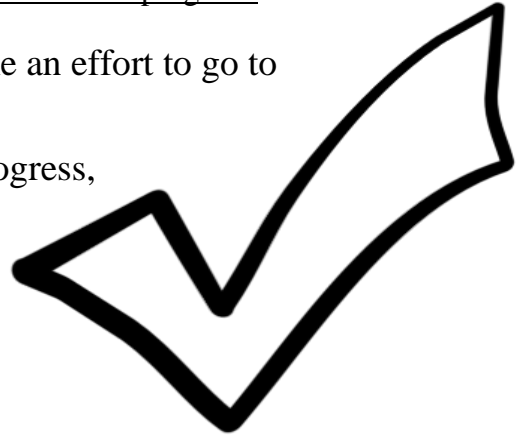




## Frequent Check- Ins

This is often a check for understanding, or check on progress.

- Once you have given an assignment, make an effort to go to this student to check for understanding
- If you give a project, check in on their progress, and provide assistance
- Look for opportunities to help the student without them initiating it



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## Copy of Notes

This is essential to make sure that the student is provided with all of the tools that they need to be successful. The student should always attempt their own notes, but may miss crucial information.

- Give the student a copy of your notes that you went over in class
- Have another student who is taking notes, provide a copy to the student
- Post PowerPoint presentation on your LMS



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## Small Group Testing

This accommodation is provided to students in order for them to receive their other testing accommodations.

The special education student avoids embarrassment and non-disabled students will be less likely to ask why someone is getting something that they are not.

- Utilize your co-teacher or assistant
- They will need to be provided with another classroom, or meeting area



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## Preferential Seating

This is a type of accommodation that places the student in the classroom in a seat that is most beneficial to them.

- If the student has a difficult time seeing, place them at the front
- If the student is easily distracted, place them in the front or near the teachers desk
- If the student expresses that they want to sit in a certain seat, let them, as long as they are doing what they need to be successful and not a distraction to others



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## Graphic Organizer

This accommodation is a way to scaffold higher-order thinking, providing an opportunity to think deeper. It helps students gather their thoughts to begin to organize them.

- Provide the student with a graphic organizer chart appropriate for the material you are presenting, this should not be completed for them
- Possible Graphic Organizers include
  - Circle Map- Can be used to brainstorm patterns
  - Venn Diagram- Compare and Contrast
  - Multi- Flow Chart- Cause and effect
  - Story Board- Tell a story



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## Use of a Calculator

This is a tool often used in classes where math is involved.

- Allow students to use a calculator to reduce simple errors that can ruin a multistep problem
- This allows a student to focus on more complex problems steps instead of what 6x4 is
- If a student is working virtually, there are discrete online calculator programs
- Ask the student if they would prefer a physical calculator vs. a virtual one

## Allow Verbal Responses

Verbal responses are used for students who have a difficult time fully explaining their thoughts in written fashion.

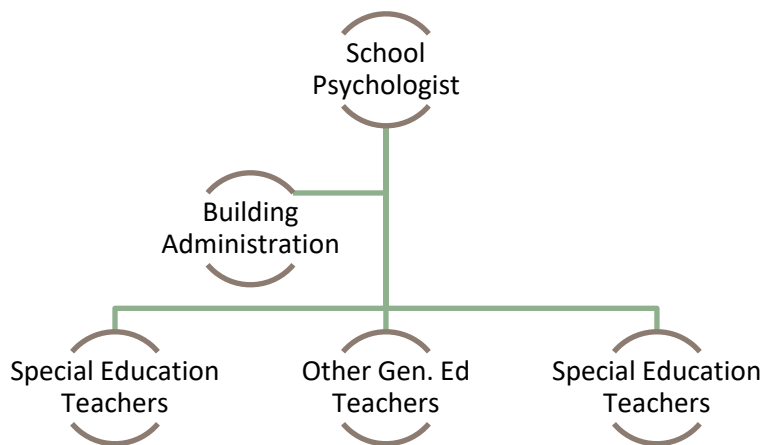
- If you have a quiz/test that requires short answer responses, allow the student to answer them verbally with you
- If you are unclear of what a student has written, ask them to verbally explain what they meant
- If you struggle to find time for this accommodation, make sure to utilize your co-teacher or assistant.



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## Who can support you?

**We all know that utilizing these accommodations in your classroom can be difficult. Not all student is the same, so having a cookie cutter way of implementing the IEP in your classroom is nearly impossible. When the above criteria does not work for your student or your classroom, it is important to know who you may be able to turn to. I want you to be able to identify a chain of command for assistance. Begin with your co-workers, if that does not work, move up the chain.**





## Section 4: Your Role in the IEP Process



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**Always remember, that you are the driving force for the IEP! The student is in the general education classroom for more than 80% of the day. YOUR INPUT IS CRUCIAL!!**



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### Who.....

**YOU!!!!** Yes you are involved in the IEP Process, just as much as the special education teacher. Here is who is considered in the IEP process...

- English Teachers
- Math Teachers
- Social Studies Teachers
- Science Teachers
- Special area teachers

# What.....

**You play a vital role in the IEP process, but what is that role? You can find that below.**

- Collect accurate, and reliable data on the students' behaviors and their progress toward their goals
- Implement the IEP accommodations and modifications



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# When.....

**Special Education teachers are going to contact you throughout the school year to check on students' progress. Here is when you participate.**

- Participate in meetings when invited
- Any time you have a student with an IEP
- Monitor students' progress toward goals at least quarterly
- Provide present level information that is detailed and addresses grade level standards



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## How.....

**Great! You know that you are now a part of the IEP process, you are aware of what your participation is, but how exactly? What does your flawless participation look like, find out below.**

- If invited to a meeting, this is your time to communicate with the parent about the student's progress, make sure to hit on all of the present level information
- Focus on the student's strengths, not just weaknesses (these are equally important)
- Provide ideal present level of performance information, find what that looks like below
  - Describe student's strengths
    - What type of learner are they in your class: visual, tactile, auditory, or kinesthetic
    - What are their abilities in your specific class and content
    - Can their strengths help them be a better learner when using different teaching methods?
    - What other abilities have you seen
  - Describe Student's Weaknesses
    - What in the classroom environment interferes with their learning



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- Provide specific information about the class activities that the student has a difficult time performing
- Provide concrete assessment data to determine current ability level
- Provide Objective Data
  - What is their current level of academic achievement
  - Try to use actual data when there is an opportunity
- Other Areas to Hit on
  - Organizational Skills
  - Social Skills
  - Physical Abilities



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LET'S CONTINUE.....

# Good Vs. Bad Present Levels

## Good...

Student tends to be quiet in class. This student learns best when there is a visual model presented to them. Student has a difficult time writing at grade level, but their reading ability is comparable to their peers.

Utilizing class assessments student averages a 75% on all tests, and their reading level is at about 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

Student struggles to stay on task, and needs redirected often. Student is not often distracted by their peers, but by their cell phone. Student does better with their writing when they are given a model to go off of. Student has several missing assignments, organizational skills may need some work.

Students gets along well with their peers, and does a good job asking for help when they do not understand something.

## Bad...

Student has a D- in this class. Has a lot of absences and missing assignments. Nice student, respectful to me and their classmates.



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# Why...

**You may not know this, but you are an extremely important entity to the IEP process. Without your input the IEP will not be a sound document that is individualized to the student's needs. So why is your input important?**



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- Legal Obligation
- Provides Clarification on what can you and SHOULD be doing to help a student succeed in your class
- The student is (or should be) submitting measurable data to you via assignments, projects, and tests
- INTERACTION, INTERACTION, INTERACTION! IEPs cannot be individualized without your valuable input. You interact with the student every day, and the special education teacher may not have a chance to



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# Accommodations Cheat Sheet

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
1				Accommodations															
2	Student Name	Disability	Goals	Extended Time	Modified Work	Modified Tests	Tests read aloud	Break Down Assignments	Models & Examples	Freq. Check Ins	Copy of Notes	Small Group Testing	Preferential Seating	Graphic Organizer	Use of Calculator	Verbal Responses	Text to Speech	BIP	Notes
3				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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# Possible Website Resources

**Below you will find a list of resources for understanding Special Education laws, information on different states and how they interpret IDEA, resources for IEP accommodations, graphic organizers etc., and IEP process information.**

<https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/your-childs-rights/basics-about-childs-rights/special-education-federal-law-vs-state-law>

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/index.html>

<https://www.smartkidswithld.org/getting-help/the-abcs-of-ieps/examples-of-accommodations-modifications/>

[https://nwbores.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_308355/File/Parent%20Resources/Special%20Education%20Resources/IEP/Roles%20at%20IEP.pdf](https://nwbores.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_308355/File/Parent%20Resources/Special%20Education%20Resources/IEP/Roles%20at%20IEP.pdf)

<https://specialedresource.com/>

## Graphic Organizers

<https://www.teachervision.com/graphic-organizer/math-graphic-organizers-gallery>

<https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/learning-at-home/encouraging-reading-writing/graphic-organizers-for-reading>

<https://www.dailyteachingtools.com/free-graphic-organizers-w.html>

# THANK YOU!

I hope that this handbook has been helpful for you on your journey of IEP implementation. You face many challenges and are limited to what you can do with a lack of resources and time. As I know, those are huge obstacles to cross and overcome. With this handbook, I hope that I have created a handbook to address those questions that you may have. I hope this handbook acts as a guide for you to utilize whenever you are in a rut!

Feel free to keep this handbook on your desk for easy access. You can jump from different sections and use it as a resource whenever you are in a rut. Every student is different and what works for one student may not work for the next, which is why a number of options are available to you. However, if you find something that works better in your classroom, by all means do it!

All of the contents of this handbook were created by me unless otherwise specified.

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

For this project, the purpose of the research was to determine the challenges that general education teachers face; in one single high school building, when implementing the IEP in their inclusive class setting. A handbook was created to help those general educators learn the special education laws, and learn strategies to overcome the challenges that they face. The handbook aims to provide general educators with strategies for implementing IEP accommodations for students with IEPs. This study was conducted utilizing a survey for the general education teachers to complete. The purpose of the survey was to identify which of the special education laws they are familiar with if any, and if they can easily explain what they include. The survey also was intended to identify the challenges that the teachers in one specific school face with implementing the IEP as well as their attitudes on inclusion. In addition, the survey also identified accommodations that these general education teachers use, and those that they find challenging. The data collected from the survey helped guide the contents of the handbook and gave the general education teachers a resource guide of strategies to make sure that the IEP is implemented as it should be in their inclusive classrooms.

Key findings from the literature determined that general education teachers find it challenging to implement the IEP in their inclusive classrooms. These challenges include but are not limited to: lack of time, lack of training, lack of support, limited resources, and Special Education teacher retention. Many teachers have a difficult time implementing the IEP in their classrooms due to these challenges. Many general education teachers lack knowledge of the IEP, its components, and the laws put in place at the federal level protecting students with disabilities. According to the literature and the findings of this study show that these challenges that general education teachers face cause negative attitudes toward the inclusive class setting. This can be detrimental to the success of the student.

There are many gaps in the current literature on these challenges as there is not much research pertaining to secondary education in terms of inclusive education. There is limited research in terms of pedagogical practices for secondary education teachers, especially with the increased time students spend in the general education setting once they are at the secondary level compared to the elementary level. This was the driving force for my research, as working at the secondary level you see the challenges and you experience the lack of IEP implementation. I

set out to find a solution to the problem to begin seeing an increase of success from students with disabilities.

### **Limitations of the Study and Handbook**

The limitations of this study have to do with the sample size of the survey participants. This study only had 38 out of 60 participants complete the survey, this was a 63% response rate, and more than 50% is a good response rate. The reasons for the response rate are several- it is the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic that has affected the whole world, including the US. Schools are particularly affected and are struggling to contain the spread and keep the safety and health of children and teachers in mind. Thus, the resulting schedule changes and school closings have created enormous stress on everyone, particularly teachers, as they had to learn and implement alternative forms of instruction, in the face of social distancing regulations imposed by the state.

Ideally, if more teachers had taken the survey it would have allowed for more data to be analyzed, thus providing more information to create the handbook. If the survey had been given to a variety of different schools from both rural, and urban schools, from different socio-economic backgrounds it would have provided more diverse results. The more diverse results would have provided a better understanding of the challenges that all teachers face when implementing the IEP without biases. The limitations of the handbook are that it is only be tailored to the needs of one high school, and the participants who provided feedback on the survey. The main reason for this is a convenience sample was chosen for research participation, given the time constraints of the study. Had more participants in the building participated in the survey, it would have provided information to make the handbook beneficial to the entire general education teaching staff. With the study only being conducted in one high school, it is possible that the handbook will only benefit those teachers, and perhaps not easily generalized to all general education teachers.

### **Strengths of the Handbook**

The purpose of this handbook is for teachers to use it as a reference to overcome the challenges that they face with implementing the IEP in their classrooms. Through data collected



in this study, the handbook will provide a brief overview of the laws protecting special education students, and those governing the education provided to those students. It will provide strategies that overcome the challenges that these general education teachers have expressed in their survey responses. Due to the number of teachers that expressed their challenges with providing the IEP accommodations, a brief explanation of common accommodations, and strategies for implementing them will also be provided in the handbook. For example, in the handbook, I have provided teachers with common accommodations and bullet points of what those accommodations might look like. These bullet point examples took into consideration the challenges that these teachers expressed and provided a way to implement them by eliminating those challenges. Special education students learn at a different pace than those without a disability, the use of accommodations will greatly enhance their ability to access the curriculum and find success with the use of said accommodations. In the survey, teachers expressed their distaste for the IEP document by stating that it is too wordy or did not seem to be individualized enough. This is in part due to the challenges that Special Education teachers face when attempting to collect present levels at the secondary level. This handbook provides information for the general education teachers' responsibility in the IEP process. This is especially important when collecting present levels, as these are what drives the IEP. The handbook provides an example of what a present levels section should look like and how we get that information from the general education teacher.

### **Recommended Use of the Handbook**

The use of this handbook is recommended for general education teachers who teach students with IEPs in the inclusive class setting. Many teachers can benefit from the use of the information and strategies provided to them in this handbook for overcoming the challenges that they have expressed. These challenges such as limited time, lack of support, class sizes, and limited resources were taken into consideration when completing this handbook. Some of these challenges come from not understanding how each of the accommodations should be implemented in the classroom as well as not knowing whom they can turn to for support. The handbook provides a brief overview of all of the important aspects of the IEP, the legislation, and the implementation, as well as examples on how to implement them. This handbook is intended to be utilized as a resource to feel more confident teaching students with IEPs in their inclusive

classrooms. The handbook might be especially beneficial to first-year teachers, as it will act as a proactive measure to increase understanding and comfort as opposed to reactive for the teachers who are currently experiencing difficulties. For example, this handbook might help novice teachers gain information on the IEP, the legislation of Special Education, understand what each accommodation is and how to implement them in their classroom, and also for preparing teachers to structure and organize present level information for IEP meetings.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

The number of students with disabilities being placed in the general education class setting has continuously been rising. The demands of the teachers to implement those IEPs in their inclusive classroom also continues to rise. Due to this increase, general education teachers need to be educated and supported to overcome those challenges. One suggestion for future research is to look at pre-service teacher education to identify what is being taught in regards to special education and change these programs to address the challenges that they face. This is particularly important because both published literature and my research showed that many teachers are unaware of some components of the IEP and how special education law affects them and not just Special Education teachers, as well as pedagogical practices for teaching students with disabilities. Another suggestion for future research is to identify more strategies geared toward secondary education. In the published literature, several studies identify and suggest strategies for elementary education, but very few at the secondary level. More secondary education relating to special education, in general, would be beneficial, due to the limiting amount of studies conducted at the secondary level. This is also critical because many secondary students may not be adequately prepared to transition to post-secondary settings if teachers are not aware of and implement evidence-based strategies during high school years. Adequate preparation in high school is essential for their success in vocational and higher education.

### **Personal Reflection**

It is extremely important for all teachers to understand the IEP and especially the knowledge to implementing it in their classrooms. It is even more important that general education teachers understand the IEP, its components, the laws, and how to implement it in their

classroom because students with disabilities tend to be with them more than 80% of the day because it is the least restrictive environment. In my own experience as a special education teacher, I have witnessed the challenges that teachers expressed in their survey responses. I have also witnessed students with disabilities not getting their accommodations met within the general education class setting. The majority of the teacher's responses to how much they agree with their preparedness to teach students with disabilities were on average, agree. As I reflect on that specific question it almost contradicts what I am personally experiencing with the students on my caseload. I feel that I am constantly advocating for them for their accommodations. There most certainly needs to be more research conducted at the secondary level, I know and understand that implementing the IEPs in the classroom is difficult.

This handbook has been eye-opening to create. I did not want it too lengthy or too in-depth because it will be considered as just another piece teachers are expected to read. If that were the case, they will not even attempt to read it. I want this to be something that they can use as a quick reference and a resource they want to have at hand and on top of their desks, not something that they shove to the side. This Thesis and Special Project has been an experience that I will probably never forget. The ups and downs that I went through have definitely taught me that I can overcome almost anything if I put my mind to it. Going into this research, I was ill-prepared, but I overcame it without quitting, even though I wanted to many times. The guidance and support that I received from family, friends, my professor, and my classmates during this time kept me going. I appreciate all of the motivation and especially the encouragement to help me achieve my goals.

## APPENDIX A. CITI TRAINING

		Completion Date 13-May-2019 Expiration Date 13-May-2023 Record ID 31556286
This is to certify that:		
<b>Amy Groh</b>		
Has completed the following CITI Program course:		
<b>Human Research</b>		(Curriculum Group)
<b>Group 2.Social Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel</b>		(Course Learner Group)
<b>1 - Basic Course</b>		(Stage)
Under requirements set by:		
<b>Purdue University</b>		
Verify at <a href="http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wcb4095a6-e226-4f60-96ea-196a6e1adf84-31556286">www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wcb4095a6-e226-4f60-96ea-196a6e1adf84-31556286</a>		

## **APPENDIX B. IRB APPROVAL**

Date: 2020-10-20

PI: RAMA COUSIK

Re: Initial - IRB-2020-1363

*Challenges General Education Teachers Face When Implementing the IEP*

The Purdue University Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) has determined that the research project identified above qualifies as exempt from IRB review, under federal human subjects research regulations 45 CFR 46.104. The Category for this Exemption is listed below . Protocols exempted by the Purdue HRPP do not require regular renewal. However, the administrative check-in date is 2023-10-20. The IRB must be notified when this study is closed. If a study closure request has not been initiated by this date, the HRPP will request study status update for the record.

Specific notes related to your study are found below.

Decision: Exempt

Category:

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Category 2.(ii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation.

Findings: NA

Research Notes: NA

Any modifications to the approved study must be submitted for review through Cayuse IRB. All approval letters and study documents are located within the Study Details in Cayuse IRB.

What are your responsibilities now, as you move forward with your research?

**Document Retention:** The PI is responsible for keeping all regulated documents, including IRB correspondence such as this letter, approved study documents, and signed consent forms for at least three (3) years following protocol closure for audit purposes. Documents regulated by HIPAA, such as Release Authorizations, must be maintained for six (6) years.

**Site Permission:** If your research is conducted at locations outside of Purdue University (such as schools, hospitals, or businesses), you must obtain written permission from all sites to recruit, consent, study, or observe participants. Generally, such permission comes in the form of a letter from the school superintendent, director, or manager. You must maintain a copy of this permission with study records.

**Training:** All researchers collecting or analyzing data from this study must renew training in human subjects research via the CITI Program ([www.citiprogram.org](http://www.citiprogram.org)) every 4 years. New personnel must complete training and be added to the protocol before beginning research with human participants or their data.

**Modifications:** Change to any aspect of this protocol or research personnel must be approved by the IRB before implementation, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects or others. In such situations, the IRB should still be notified immediately.

**Unanticipated Problems/Adverse Events:** Unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others, serious adverse events, and noncompliance with the approved protocol must be reported to the IRB immediately through an incident report. When in doubt, consult with the HRPP/IRB.

**Monitoring:** The HRPP reminds researchers that this study is subject to monitoring at any time by Purdue's HRPP staff, Institutional Review Board, Research Quality Assurance unit, or authorized external entities. Timely cooperation with monitoring procedures is an expectation of IRB approval.

Change of Institutions: If the PI leaves Purdue, the study must be closed or the PI must be replaced on the study or transferred to a new IRB. Studies without a Purdue University PI will be closed.

Other Approvals: This Purdue IRB approval covers only regulations related to human subjects research protections (e.g. 45 CFR 46). This determination does not constitute approval from any other Purdue campus departments, research sites, or outside agencies. The Principal Investigator and all researchers are required to affirm that the research meets all applicable local/state/ federal laws and university policies that may apply.

If you have questions about this determination or your responsibilities when conducting human subjects research on this project or any other, please do not hesitate to contact Purdue's HRPP at [irb@purdue.edu](mailto:irb@purdue.edu) or 765-494-5942. We are here to help!

Sincerely,

Purdue University Human Research Protection Program/ Institutional Review Board  
Login to Cayuse IRB

## **APPENDIX C. SURVEY**

### **Survey Questions**

#### Demographic Questions

1. What is your gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Prefer not to say

This questions was asked to determine if gender played a role in their attitudes or beliefs on inclusion.

2. Number of years teaching?

This questions was asked to determine the participants experience and if that made a difference on how they feel about teaching students with disabilities.

3. How many students in your class/classes currently have an IEP?

This question was asked to determine how much of a need they have with understanding the IEP and their experience with working with students with disabilities.

4. Approximately how many students in your previous years of teaching have had an IEP?

This questions was asked to determine the type of experience they have ad with teaching students with disabilities throughout their careers.

5. Total amount of college courses you have taken to teach students with disabilities.

This survey question was to determine if the general education teach had a pre-service training on how to teach students with disabilities.

6. How many professional learning training sessions; provided by your district; have you been offered to teach students with learning disabilities.

This survey question was to determine the type of training (if any) that the general education teachers have received to teach students with disabilities.



7. Most days, I am prepared to teach students with disabilities in my general education class.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree or disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Gotshall, C., & Stefanou, C. (2011). The Effects of On-Going Consultation for Accommodating Students with Disabilities on Teacher Self-Efficacy and Learned Helplessness. *Education*, 132(2), 321–331.

8. I am given adequate training and resources to understand the IEP and its components.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither Agree or Disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Sacks, L. H., & Haider, S. (2017). Challenges in implementation of individualized educational plan (IEPs): Perspectives from India and the United States of America. *Indian Journal of Health & Wellbeing*, 8(9), 958–965.

9. I am given adequate time to collaborate with Special Education teachers.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree or disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Da Fonte, M. A., & Barton-Arwood, S. M. (2017). Collaboration of General and Special Education Teachers: Perspectives and Strategies. *Intervention in School & Clinic*, 53(2), 99–106.

10. I feel that I get adequate support to teach students with disabilities from Special Education teachers, Para educators (assistants), and my school administrative staff.

Fuchs, W. W. (2010). Examining Teachers' Perceived Barriers Associated with Inclusion. *SRATE journal*, 19(1), 30-35.

11. In your opinion, how do you feel about students with disabilities being in your general education classes?

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Vaz, S., Wilson, N., Falkmer, M., Sim, A., Scott, M., Cordier, R., & Falkmer, T. (2015). Factors associated with primary school teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities. PloS one, 10(8), e0137002.

12. Are you aware of the laws that protect students with disabilities? If so which laws, and can you provide a brief description?

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O'Connor, E. A., Yasik, A. E., & Horner, S. L. (2016). Teachers' Knowledge of Special Education Laws: What Do They Know?. Insights into Learning Disabilities, 13(1), 7-18.

13. What do you think that the biggest challenge is with implementing the IEP in your classroom?

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Sacks, L. H., & Haider, S. (2017). Challenges in implementation of individualized educational plan (IEPs): Perspectives from India and the United States of America. Indian Journal of Health & Wellbeing, 8(9), 958–965.

14. What type of support if any are you given to effectively teach students with disabilities in you general education classroom?

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Grskovic, J. A., & Trzcinka, S. M. (2011). Essential standards for preparing secondary content teachers to effectively teach students with mild disabilities in included settings. *American Secondary Education*, 94-106.

15. What are your concerns or suggestions about the developments and application of the IEP?

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Debbag, M. (2017). Opinions of Prospective Classroom Teachers about Their Competence for Individualized Education Program (IEP). *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 5(2), 181-185.

16. What are the roles and responsibilities of special and general education teachers in your inclusive classroom?

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Keefe, E. B., & Moore, V. (2004). The Challenge of Co-Teaching in Inclusive Classrooms at the High School Level: What the Teachers Told Us. *American Secondary Education*, 32(3), 77–88.

17. In regards to common IEP accommodations listed below, what challenges (if any) do you have in implementing the in your classroom? If you have not had to implement an accommodation listed, respond with NA. If you have how did you incorporate the in your curriculum?

- a. Preferential Seating
- b. Extended time
- c. The use of a graphic organizer
- d. Small group for testing
- e. Simplify the text material
- f. Use of a modified curriculum
- g. Reduce the number of problems to solve
- h. Chunk tasks into smaller assignments
- i. Provide a copy of notes
- j. Provide visual aids to support content

- k. Use of calculator on tests, quizzes and assignments
- l. Allow for verbal responses rather than writing it out.
- m. Modified tests and quizzes
- n. Eliminate 1 multiple choice question
- o. Use of text to speech option

Arnold, W. R. (2018). Teachers' feedback on acceptability and challenges to implementation of special education accommodations with fidelity: A single qualitative case study (Order No. 10982737). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2154434214).

18. Please provide any recommendation to improve the IEP document.

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Rotter, K. (2014). IEP use by general and special education teachers. Sage Open, 4(2), 2158244014530410.

## APPENDIX D. RECRUITMENT LETTER

(Date)

**STUDY TITLE: The Challenges General Education Teachers Face When Implementing the IEP** IRB # 2020-1363

Dear Teachers

My name is Amy Groh. I am a Special Education teacher and a graduate student at Purdue University Fort Wayne. I am requesting your assistance with my research, which is a critical component in completion of my Master's program in Special Education. The title of my study is **The Challenges General Education Teachers Face When Implementing the IEP**.

You are invited to complete a survey about your knowledge of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), the laws that protect, and your beliefs of the implementation of the IEP in your general education classrooms. This survey is optional and completely confidential. You will not be asked to provide any identifiers or personal information. This one time survey will take you no longer than 20 minutes to complete and your responses will be beneficial to my research. Your responses will add to the body of knowledge in the area of implementation of IEP. The survey will be generated online as an anonymous survey, I will not even know who responded with what. Your survey responses will be protected electronically with a username and password combo. Once I have completed my study, they will be erased from the system. The survey link will be provided to you below. The school principal [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED] has approved of this survey.

Please note that you have the right not to participate in my research or complete the survey. If you choose not to participate, this will not affect you in any way.

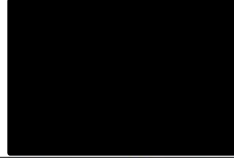
I appreciate your participation and your time taking this survey. Please feel free to contact me with any questions [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. You may also contact my professor, Dr. Rama Cousik, Ph. D. at [cousikr@pfw.edu](mailto:cousikr@pfw.edu) or 260-481-6003. Thank you for your time and attention.

*Special Education Teacher*

[REDACTED]

*Amy Groh*

## APPENDIX E. PRINCIPAL PERMISSION



9/24/20

To Whom it May Concern:

I am in support of Amy Groh conducting research for her Masters Thesis requirements. She and I have talked and she will be creating a survey for [REDACTED] Teachers to complete.

I had Amy speak with our [REDACTED] and he is supportive of this as well.

Please let me know if you have additional questions or need additional information.

Respectfully,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the principal.

A black rectangular redaction box covering the name of the principal.

Principal

## **APPENDIX F. TIMELINE**

September 23, 2020 – Asked for permission from the principal at the high school to survey his staff.

September 24, 2020 – Received letter of approval from the principal, to survey his staff at the high school.

October 18, 2020 – Finalize Recruitment Letter and survey questions.

October 21, 2020 – Submit IRB Application

November 2020

Work on Methodology Revisions

Completion of Chapter 1 – Introduction

December 2020

Completion of Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Completion of Chapter 3 – Methodology

December 11, 2020 – Recruitment email and survey sent to General Education Teachers

January 2021

Revise Chapters 1- 3

Design of Project and Final Product

Collect all completed surveys and begin to analyze the data collected

January 6, 2021 – Send out reminder emails for the survey

January 11, 2021 – Survey responses due back from participants

February 2021

Design Project and Final Product

Organize the data collected from survey

Work on Chapter 4 Results

Complete Chapter 6

Work on Chapter 5 Handbook

February 15, 2020 – Survey responses compiled, analyzed and summarized

March 2021

Finalize Chapter 4 Results

Finalize Chapter 6

April 2021

Completion of Special Project

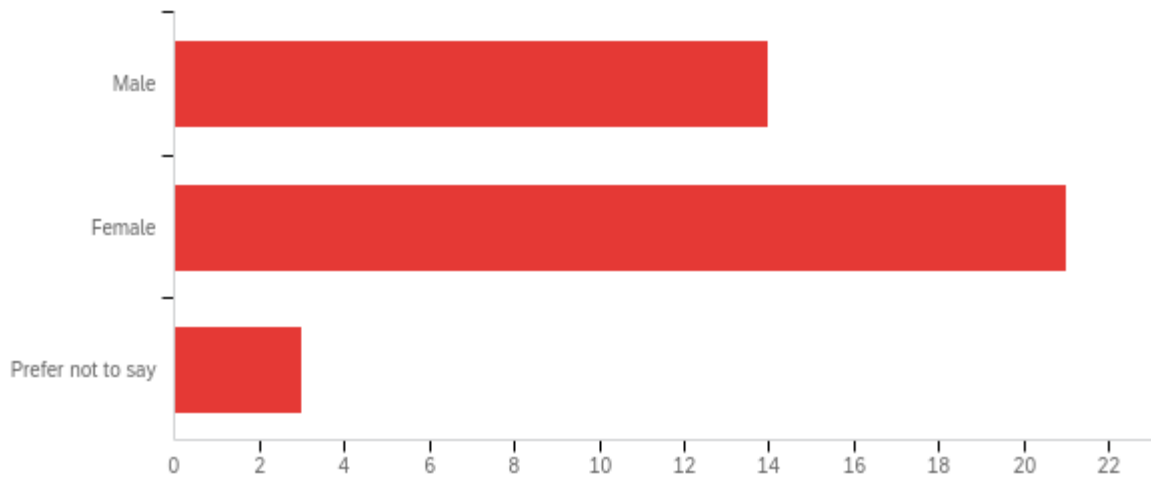
## APPENDIX G: RAW DATA

### Default Report

*General Education Teachers Challenges with Implementing the IEP*

March 22nd 2021, 1:47 pm MDT

#### Q1 - What is your gender?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What is your gender?	1.00	3.00	1.71	0.60	0.36	38

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Male	36.84%	14
2	Female	55.26%	21
3	Prefer not to say	7.89%	3
	Total	100%	38



Q2 - Number of years teaching?

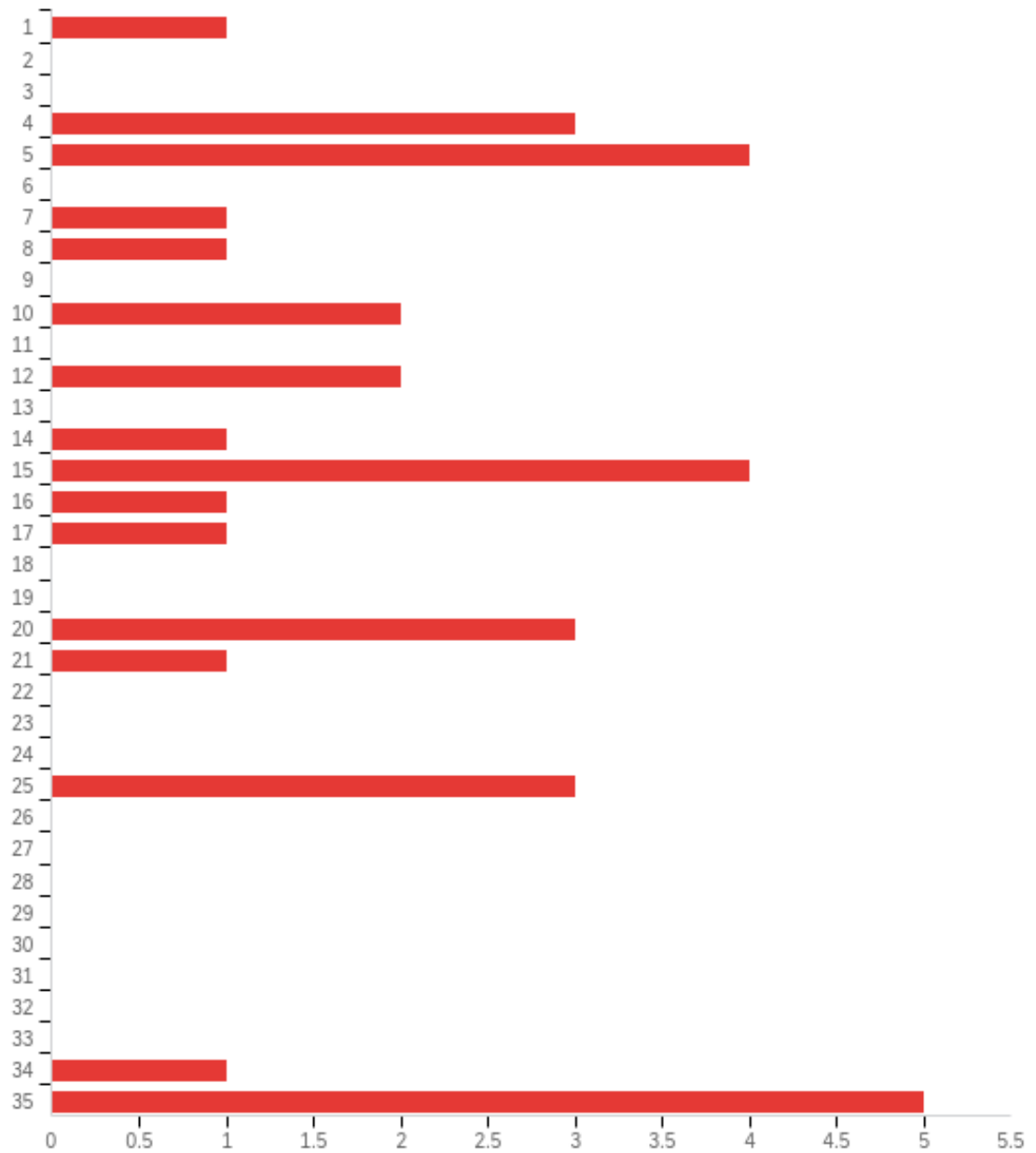


#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Number of years teaching?	5.00	42.00	20.18	10.86	118.05	38

#	Answer	%	Count
4	1	0.00%	0
5	2	5.26%	2
6	3	5.26%	2
7	4	2.63%	1
8	5	7.89%	3
9	6	0.00%	0
10	7	2.63%	1
11	8	7.89%	3
12	9	2.63%	1
13	0	0.00%	0
14	11	2.63%	1
15	12	5.26%	2
16	13	0.00%	0
17	14	5.26%	2
18	15	5.26%	2
19	16	0.00%	0
21	17	0.00%	0
22	18	7.89%	3
23	19	0.00%	0
24	20	7.89%	3
25	21	0.00%	0
26	22	0.00%	0
27	23	0.00%	0
28	24	2.63%	1
29	25	0.00%	0
30	26	0.00%	0
31	27	5.26%	2

32	28	0.00%	0
33	29	7.89%	3
34	30	7.89%	3
35	31	0.00%	0
36	32	2.63%	1
37	33	0.00%	0
38	34	2.63%	1
39	35	0.00%	0
40	36	0.00%	0
41	37	0.00%	0
42	38	2.63%	1
43	39	0.00%	0
44	40	0.00%	0
45	41	0.00%	0
46	42	0.00%	0
47	43	0.00%	0
48	44	0.00%	0
49	45	0.00%	0
50	46	0.00%	0
51	47	0.00%	0
52	48	0.00%	0
53	49	0.00%	0
54	50	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	38

**Q3 - How many students in your class/classes currently have an IEP?**



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How many students in your class/classes currently have an IEP?	4.00	38.00	19.59	10.62	112.71	34

#	Answer	%	Count
4	1	2.94%	1
5	2	0.00%	0
6	3	0.00%	0
7	4	8.82%	3
8	5	11.76%	4
9	6	0.00%	0
10	7	2.94%	1
11	8	2.94%	1
12	9	0.00%	0
13	10	5.88%	2
14	11	0.00%	0
15	12	5.88%	2
16	13	0.00%	0
17	14	2.94%	1
18	15	11.76%	4
19	16	2.94%	1
20	17	2.94%	1
21	18	0.00%	0
22	19	0.00%	0
23	20	8.82%	3
24	21	2.94%	1
25	22	0.00%	0
26	23	0.00%	0
27	24	0.00%	0
28	25	8.82%	3
29	26	0.00%	0
30	27	0.00%	0

31	28	0.00%	0
32	29	0.00%	0
33	30	0.00%	0
34	31	0.00%	0
35	32	0.00%	0
36	33	0.00%	0
37	34	2.94%	1
38	35	14.71%	5
	Total	100%	34

**Q4 - Approximately how many students in your previous years of teaching have had an IEP?**

Approximately how many students in your previous years of teaching have had an IEP?

several--usually at least one third of the class

30

30-40

20

300

20

75

Aproximately 15% of all students

30

Guessing you want an average. Would guess 8

35

100

Many; I have a special education background and have taught both general and special education courses.

29

around 25-30

<1%-100%

15-20 each year

50

? Maybe 10 per year? I'm not entirely sure how many I have currently too.

Between 5-20

Impossible to say

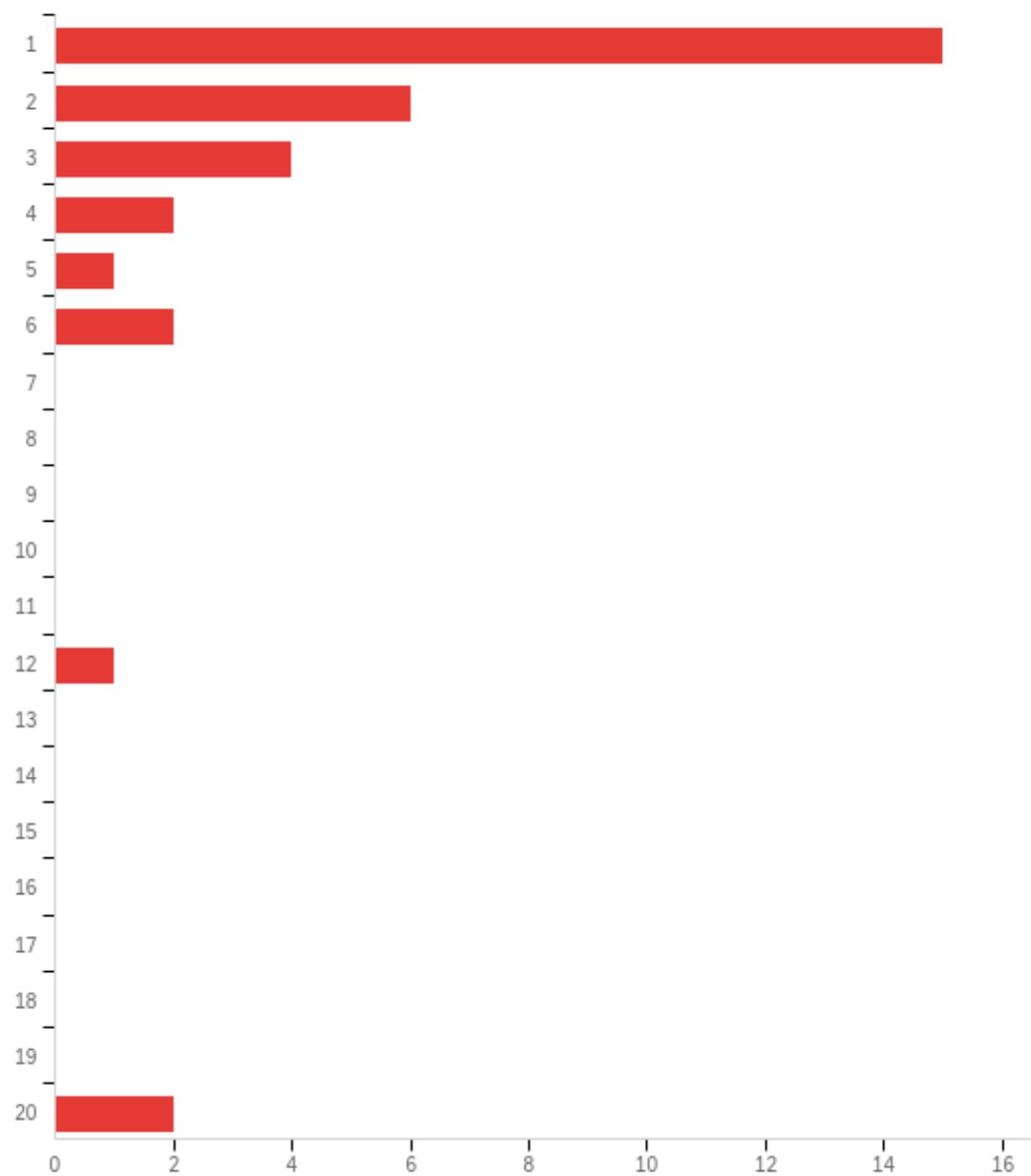
15

10

175
20
200
30%
I would guess that integrated classes with a co-teacher were made up of up to 75% of students with an IEP
same
150
5-25
3 - 10 per year
200
150
15
30



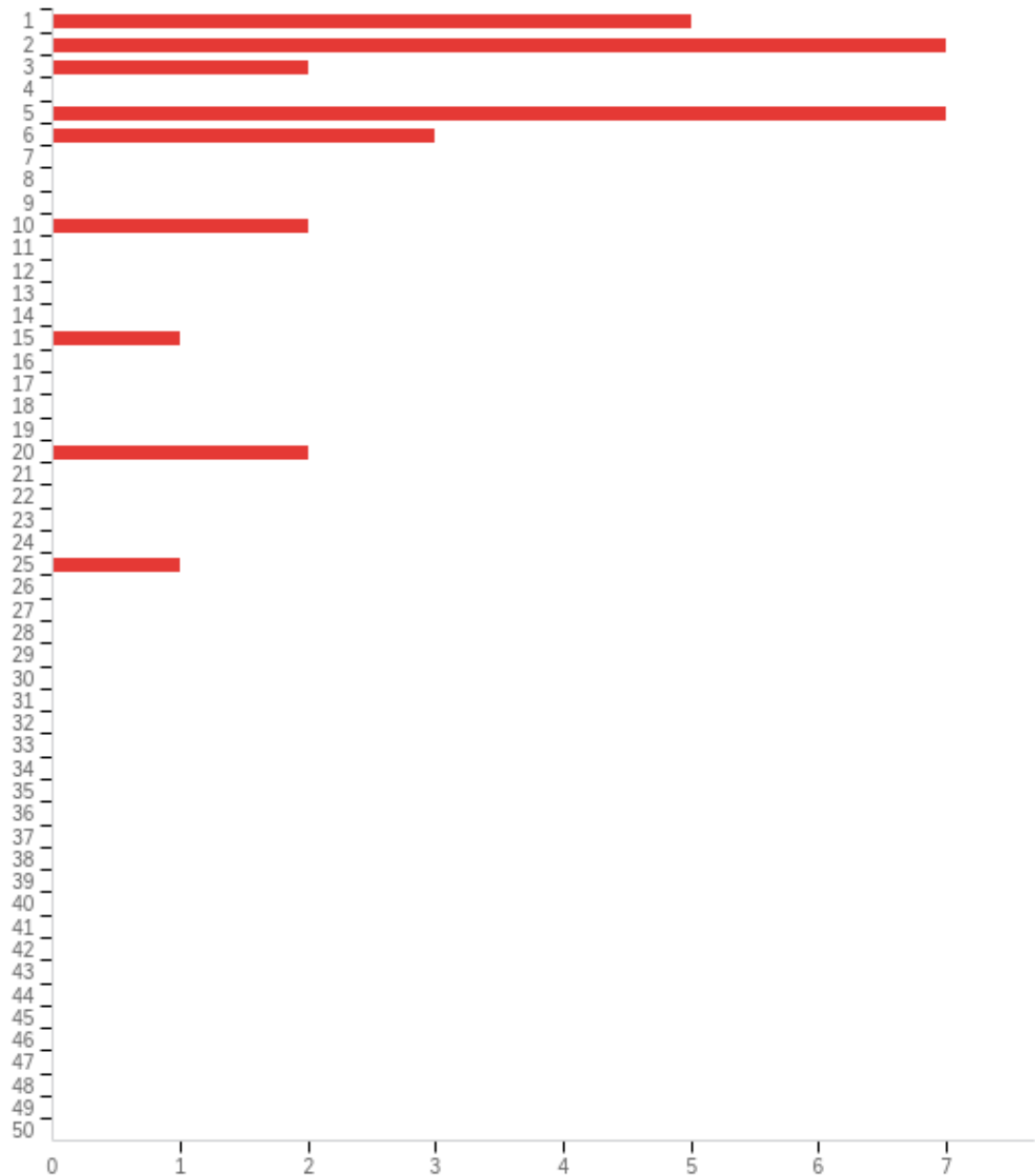
**Q5 - Total amount of college courses you have taken to teach students with disabilities.**



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Total amount of college courses you have taken to teach students with disabilities.	4.00	23.00	6.52	4.74	22.43	33

#	Answer	%	Count
4	1	45.45%	15
5	2	18.18%	6
6	3	12.12%	4
7	4	6.06%	2
8	5	3.03%	1
9	6	6.06%	2
10	7	0.00%	0
11	8	0.00%	0
12	9	0.00%	0
13	10	0.00%	0
14	11	0.00%	0
15	12	3.03%	1
16	13	0.00%	0
17	14	0.00%	0
18	15	0.00%	0
19	16	0.00%	0
20	17	0.00%	0
21	18	0.00%	0
22	19	0.00%	0
23	20	6.06%	2
	Total	100%	33

**Q6 - How many professional learning training sessions; provided by your district; have you been offered to teach students with learning disabilities?**

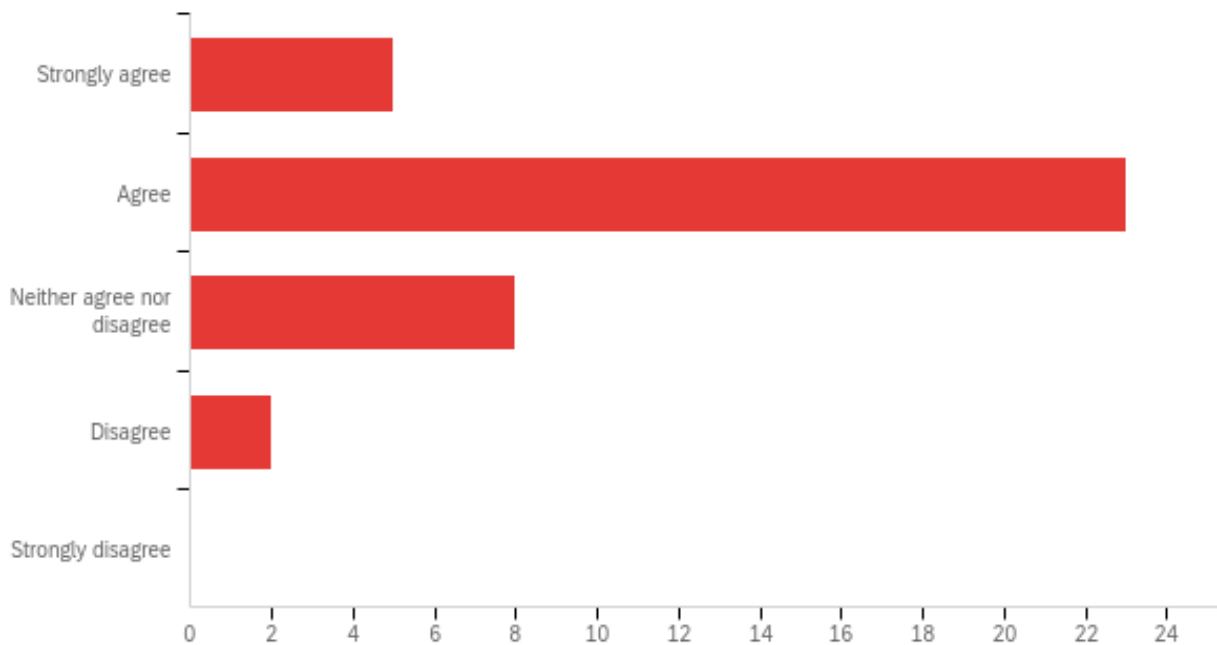


#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	How many professional learning training sessions; provided by your district; have you been offered to teach students with learning disabilities?	4.00	28.00	8.93	6.13	37.60	30

#	Answer	%	Count
4	1	16.67%	5
5	2	23.33%	7
6	3	6.67%	2
7	4	0.00%	0
8	5	23.33%	7
9	6	10.00%	3
10	7	0.00%	0
11	8	0.00%	0
12	9	0.00%	0
13	10	6.67%	2
14	11	0.00%	0
15	12	0.00%	0
16	13	0.00%	0
17	14	0.00%	0
18	15	3.33%	1
19	16	0.00%	0
20	17	0.00%	0
21	18	0.00%	0
22	19	0.00%	0
23	20	6.67%	2
24	21	0.00%	0
25	22	0.00%	0
26	23	0.00%	0
27	24	0.00%	0
28	25	3.33%	1
29	26	0.00%	0
30	27	0.00%	0

31	28	0.00%	0
32	29	0.00%	0
33	30	0.00%	0
34	31	0.00%	0
35	32	0.00%	0
36	33	0.00%	0
37	34	0.00%	0
38	35	0.00%	0
39	36	0.00%	0
40	37	0.00%	0
41	38	0.00%	0
42	39	0.00%	0
43	40	0.00%	0
44	41	0.00%	0
45	42	0.00%	0
46	43	0.00%	0
47	44	0.00%	0
48	45	0.00%	0
49	46	0.00%	0
50	47	0.00%	0
51	48	0.00%	0
52	49	0.00%	0
53	50	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	30

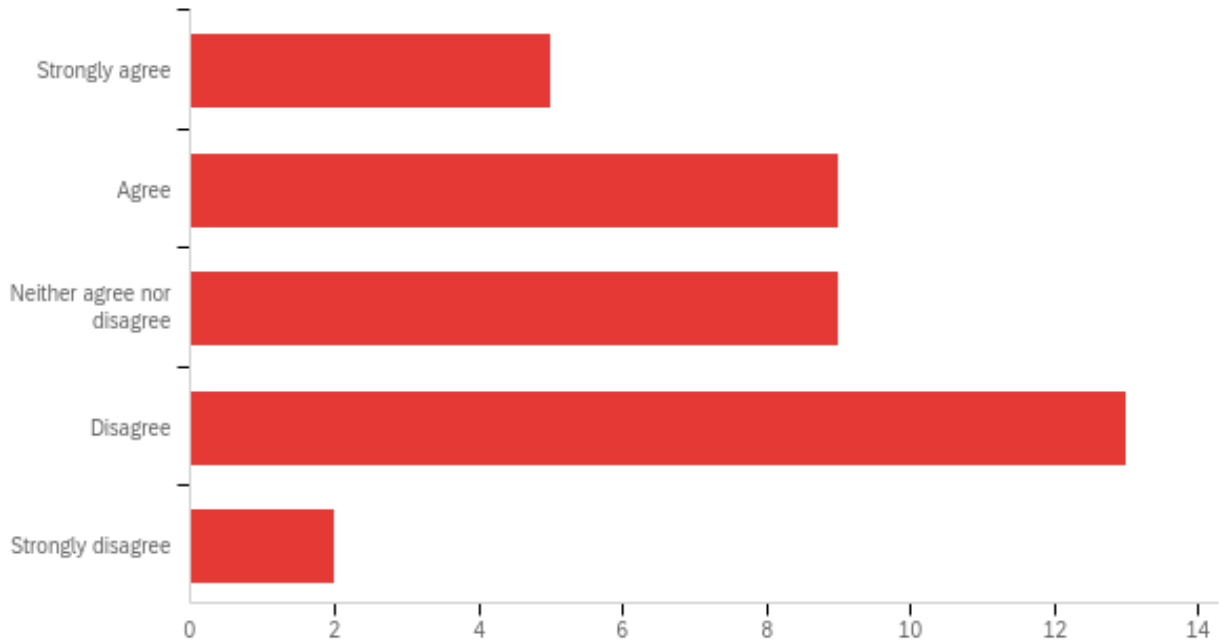
**Q9 - Most days, I am prepared to teach students with disabilities in my general education class.**



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Most days, I am prepared to teach students with disabilities in my general education class.	1.00	4.00	2.18	0.72	0.52	38

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly agree	13.16%	5
2	Agree	60.53%	23
3	Neither agree nor disagree	21.05%	8
4	Disagree	5.26%	2
5	Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	38

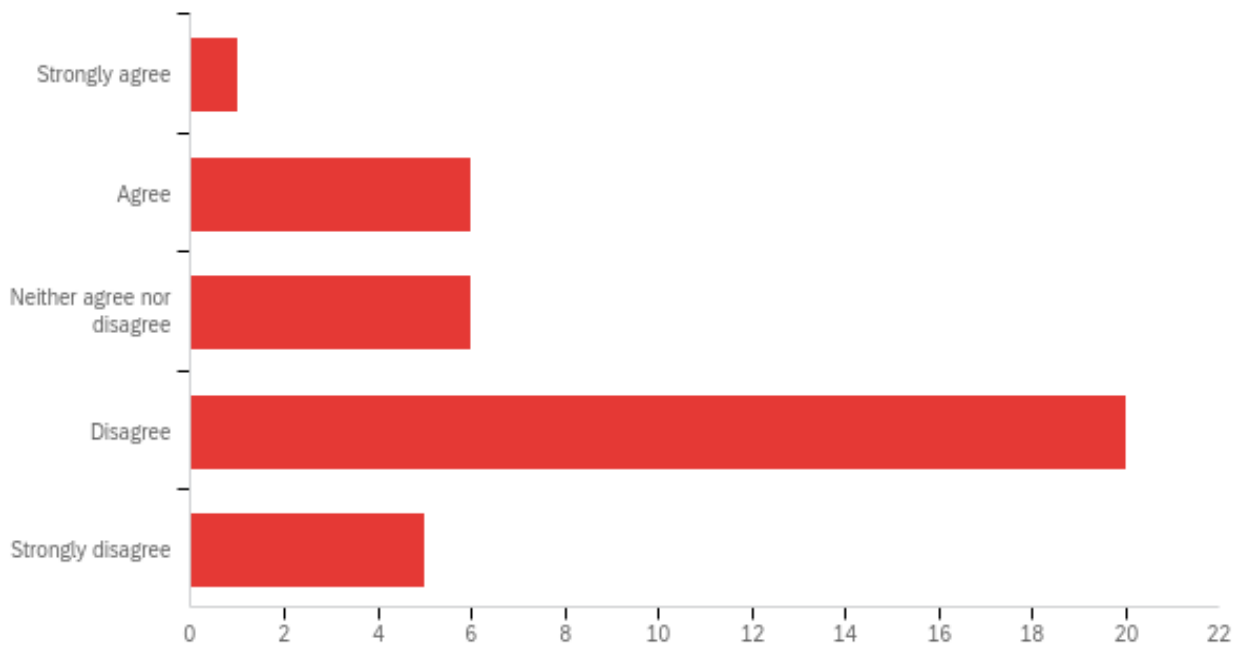
**Q10 - I am given adequate training and resources to understand the IEP and its components.**



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I am given adequate training and resources to understand the IEP and its components.	1.00	5.00	2.95	1.15	1.31	38

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly agree	13.16%	5
2	Agree	23.68%	9
3	Neither agree nor disagree	23.68%	9
4	Disagree	34.21%	13
5	Strongly disagree	5.26%	2
	Total	100%	38

**Q11 - I am given adequate time to collaborate with Special Education teachers.**

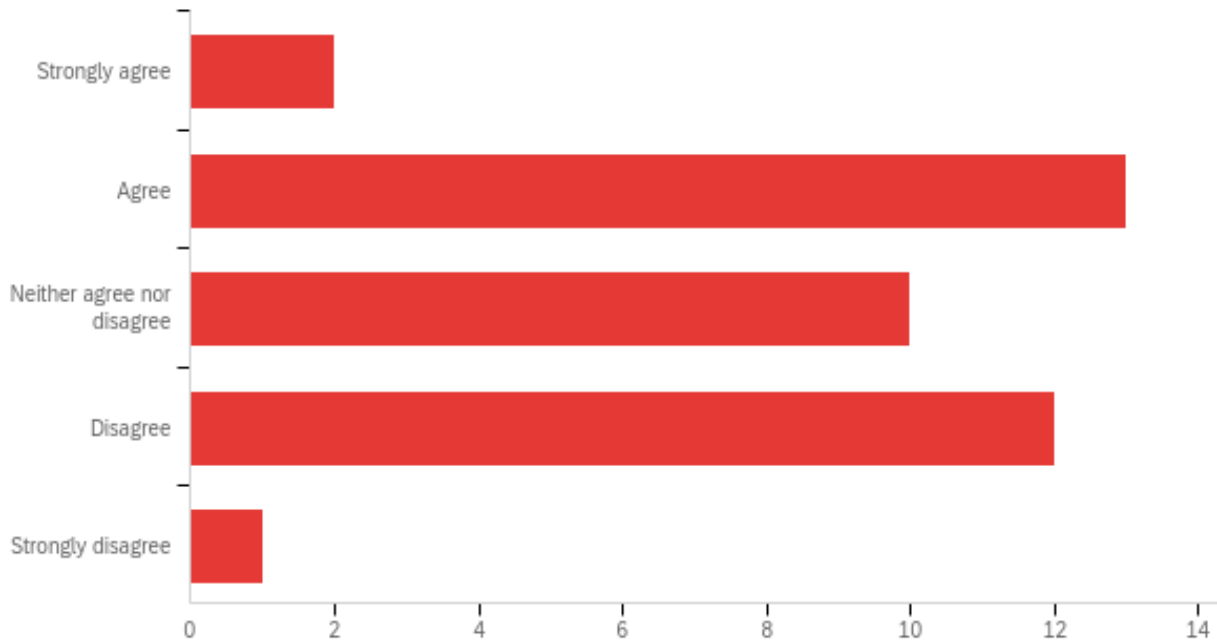


#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I am given adequate time to collaborate with Special Education teachers.	1.00	5.00	3.58	0.99	0.98	38

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly agree	2.63%	1
2	Agree	15.79%	6
3	Neither agree nor disagree	15.79%	6
4	Disagree	52.63%	20
5	Strongly disagree	13.16%	5
	Total	100%	38



**Q12 - I feel that I get adequate support to teach students with disabilities from Special Education teachers, Para educators (assistants), and my school administrative staff.**



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I feel that I get adequate support to teach students with disabilities from Special Education teachers, Para educators (assistants), and my school administrative staff.	1.00	5.00	2.92	0.98	0.97	38

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly agree	5.26%	2
2	Agree	34.21%	13
3	Neither agree nor disagree	26.32%	10
4	Disagree	31.58%	12
5	Strongly disagree	2.63%	1
	Total	100%	38

### Q13 - In your opinion, how do you feel about students with disabilities being in your general education classes?

In your opinion, how do you feel about students with disabilities being in your general education classes?

Some thrive. Others struggle because they feel overwhelmed at times.

I enjoy it very much and think I am able to greatly help them.

I teach foreign students. Although, I have noticed that when I get students with IEP in my class, they require an individual approach. There is a great need for an additional assistant teacher who will offer this approach.

Comfortable

I believe that all students deserve the same opportunities. In addition, I believe that having special education students in general education classes gives them a chance to be taught by content experts.

Most students are very capable to complete work assignments, however; many use their disability as a crutch to get out of completing work. There are some who should not be in general education because they read at a very low level.

Mixed. I feel it is important they get the same level of education as their peers; however integrated classes my take away from time needed to devote to them.

I feel like it is important for students with disabilities to be included in the normal classroom setting. In my opinion, I see it as a way for them to learn ways to balances the skills they have with the skills they do not.

I have no issues with students with disabilities being in my general education classes. At times, however, the number of students with disabilities can feel overwhelming.

I understand making accommodations. What is very difficult is if a student with an IEP gets to use a calculator, and the other students don't, and they have to take the test in my room, that is tough. Really the only issue .I understand there are laws taht need to followed, so there are not a lot of options. i accept it i

It is very important for them to be mainstreamed in the classroom. When we discuss equity and not equality students need to be in the classroom with other gen ed students.

It depends on the level and type of disability and whether a co-teacher is engaged and able to assist in modifying and presenting content.

I think it is important for special education students to have as close to the educational experience of their gen ed peers as possible. I do wish there were different levels of support offered by this district -- many of my students could benefit from a small group class for specific academic areas, not just a support/BSD class.

I feel that they should be in general ed classes to feel that they are not segregated from their peers.

I enjoy having the various levels of students in my class.

All education is enhanced by individualization. Fair is not equal and equal is not fair. Students with an IEP should have every opportunity to participate in any classes that are can be successfully completed. Support through co-teaching, classroom assistants, and differentiation benefit all students.

I teach in the arts so it is easy to include students with different abilities.

I'm good with it

---

I'm fine with it. I don't usually even notice. Some have physical disabilities and have to be accommodated and others have learning or behavioral and you figure out what to do or not to do with them. It helps understand what may be going on. I feel like a majority of mine are those being slower learners and you try to adapt to help them out and give them more time to figure things out, not penalize them.

---

I have mixed feelings about having students with disabilities in general education classes. For many, there is no problem: they do their work, perhaps with modifications or more time, and they stand up for themselves in regards to what they need. However, there are some students who, for some reason or another, have given up or are playing the system, and I have trouble reconciling their presence in the general ed classroom because they tend to cause problems, whether it be by acting out or by not doing anything. Also, I feel bad for those students who are so behind in their development that everything we do is a struggle for them, and I wonder if it wouldn't be better for them to be in a class dedicated to helping them improve the basic skills so that they can be successful in their classes.

---

First, I love teaching kids. All of them. That said, the dynamic changes in the class depending upon what's on the IEP. Behavioral IEPs are a whole other thing. One student in a class can be one too many, then. When I've had multiple in a class with BIPs, for example, it's like diffusing bombs every day. Special Ed kids are often in the room for a while before IEPs roll in. There can be land mines a teacher isn't aware of (that combined with lack of training and support, well...). I try to accommodate ALL kids' needs, so I'm up for it, but the balance is usually tipped to SpEd kids. Gen Ed kids get lost in the shuffle out of urgent necessity.

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In general, I feel comfortable having students with disabilities in my classes. What worries me the most is not having the time to properly accommodate them due to lack of resources and crowded classes.

---

I think it's good, while it may take more time to go over material it allows for multiple perspectives, and pushes my teaching to focus on different and more comprehensive methods to teach, for example it pushes me to think about what material can be chunked or scaffold for all students to understand the material which benefits everyone in the room.

---

I enjoy having students with disabilities in my general education classes. I think it makes the class more interesting and a more accurate representation of the world we live in.

---

I experience pros and cons to having students with disabilities in my gen-ed classes. It really depends on how severe the disability and how the student is coping with it. I believe there is great progress made when a sped student is integrated into a gen-ed classroom provided they are willing to work with me and communicate with me. The sp-ed students who have no desire to be there can really hinder the rest of the class.

---

I am fine with it because a lot of the supports I use for ENL students also work with sped students.

---

it is a good thing because they learn from each other.

---

I believe that all students belong in my class regardless of disabilities. It is not the disability that can be frustrating, but often the class size feels overwhelming. Even with a co-teacher or assistant, it can be very difficult to provide the adequate time and help that students need.

---

Important! It is a valuable experience for both spec ed and gen ed students.

---

I love having student with disabilities in the general classes; however, sometimes planning differentiation is tricky with so many different types of modifications needed.

---

Great. They belong there. However, remote learning has severely hampered the success of my students with disabilities, disproportionately to the gen ed students.

---

Fine. I feel that they want to push themselves. In most cases they recognize their situation and advocate for themselves. However, there are some cases where student frustration causes a shut down. That is difficult.

This is difficult to answer. Students with disabilities deserve the right to be in the general education classroom so long as they are truly in their least restrictive learning environment. Unfortunately, the general education classroom is oftentimes full of distractions that inhibit the learning of the students. Many times special education students make their biggest gains in the classroom when they have more personal learning opportunities with their BSD teachers. When I taught, I don't remember feeling overly frustrated about my special education students. Unfortunately, especially for those students who are more passive, special education students are oftentimes overlooked. Students with modifications/accommodations don't receive them unless the TOR, parent, or student is actively advocating for them.

Generally, I'm good with it.

good

I like inclusion I feel that students learn best when they are with their peers.

#### **Q14 - Are you aware of the laws that protect students with disabilities? If so which laws, and can you provide a brief description?**

Are you aware of the laws that protect students with disabilities? If so which laws, and can you provide a brief description?

Yes, I am aware that their IEPs need to be followed. I know that there are also limited days for suspension and expulsion.

I am aware of the laws around the importance of and the necessity of following the IEPs for our students.

Yes, I am aware of IDEA, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. It's a Federal Law and it spells out that all the states must provide adequate resources, professionals to meet the needs of the students with disabilities.

All students have a right to a free education in the least restrictive environment.

I am not able to describe any special laws.

Article 7 provides all of the information needed to understand the laws and procedures regarding special needs students.

no

I know of them, but I cannot cite them. Article 7

I have read Article 7 a number of times. Bottom line, the teacher of record makes us aware of the IEP. It is our job to follow it. Otherwise we can be held personally liable, lose our job, lose in court. It is the law

Yes Article 7 of the Americans with disabilities act. It outlines what a student with a learning disability what they are allowed to have to help them be successful. It also dictates to teachers what must be done to help with equity for those students.

I know there are laws. I don't know what they are.

Yes, the Free and Public Education act, which guarantees students receive as close to a general education experience as possible.

---

the right to education

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yes, they must be in the least restrictive environment

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P.L. 94-142 Federal law: to provide free and appropriate public education to students with disabilities

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Article 7 Indiana state law: to provide free and appropriate public education to students with disabilities

---

I am aware that there are laws but can't speak to anything specific.

---

not all no

---

No, I would think we have them, but don't know anything about them

---

I am aware that every student in the state of Indiana deserves an education. I am aware that students with IEPs, Behavioral Modifications, etc., must have their needs met as indicated on their reports.

---

By name? Good Lord! Well, there's the Americans with Disabilities Act. Then I think there's a "Title" something. I just failed this question! I know that they are to have the "least restrictive environment" which, to be honest, becomes the MOST restrictive environment for non-SpEd kids. I know homebound is covered by some law. Necessity to have conferences, BIPs, IEPs, testing would all be covered, as would access to assistance. I imagine that one-on-one assistants are in this, too, as well as the availability of devices, for example. Honestly, SpEd as a label is a dumping ground for too many things. The laws become blurry when covering that much.

---

I am aware that there are laws but can't describe any specifically.

---

I don't know any of the names, but I know there are laws that require schools to provide "adequate" services for them.

---

I know there are laws to protect them, but cannot speak to the laws individually.

---

Yes. The IEP is a mandatory document of services which should be provided to the child. The LRE (least restrictive environment) also mandates certain services for sped students to learn in a gen-ed classroom.

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That they are entitled to special services and have to have an IEP. That they are allowed accommodations in class and on state testing that are in their IEPs.

---

none without looking them up

---

I do not know the specific names but I know that an IEP is a law-abiding contract that teachers are required to follow.

---

I know that the IEP is a legal document, so teachers are required to provide the listed accommodations or the school can be sued. I know that students with IEP's are required to be provided education in the least restricted environment (so as not to limit the spec ed students).

---

I understand that there is laws that help with students with disabilities because my daughter has an IEP and I have been to IEP meetings every year for almost 13 years. I do not know the actual name of the laws; however, I know that they have a right to education and have accommodations recommended to better assist them.

---

ADA, least restrictive environment, full access to the general curriculum and peers without disabilities, accommodations and modifications that will allow students to successfully access curriculum, transition services and supports, rights of parents to accept/reject/participate in creation of the IEP, right to extend K-12 education until the age of 21, right to a manifest determination hearing to determine if students' struggles to participate in the school environment are a result of their disability, right to an alternative learning setting when deemed appropriate by the student support team.

---

Not really Can't kick a student with an IEP out of school????

---

IDEA/FAPE - entitles students to IEP process, accommodations, access to LRE.

---

Students are allowed to have special accommodations based on an assessment of their needs put in their individual education plan.

---

there are many complex laws that govern IEP's....in practice they are accomplishing what it sounds like they should

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Yes, Article 7 and IDEA

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## **Q15 - What do you think that the biggest challenge is with implementing the IEP in your classroom?**

What do you think that the biggest challenge is with implementing the IEP in your classroom?

---

So much going on--a lot of students in classes. Hard to offer one on one support all of the time or as much time as needed by individual students with class sizes so large. Often times, students are not receptive to IEPs--they don't want to look different so they won't leave the room to take tests or quizzes.

---

The only challenge I have faced at times is being unable to help all the students that need help at one time--sometimes the class sizes are so large.

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The biggest challenge is to adapt the major standards of the curriculum to the level of comprehension of these students with IEP's.

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It is difficult to know if the student isn't performing well because of their disability or teen behavior. There are also students with IEPs that are very high functioning and don't need extra help. Sometimes the student doesn't want to use the services provided. The IEPs are general not specific enough.

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Providing students with adequate support for their success is the most difficult challenge I face.

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Having to present the material slower than normal and allowing students the extra time to complete the assignments.

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Remembering which students get which accommodations

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Class size

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Reading and trying to remember everything that is on each IEP especially in years when I have higher numbers of students with disabilities.

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Have no issues with implementing the IEP. Have an issue with some of the students attitudes that they think they can do very little and pass. Not all by any means. But some of them like to use the IEP as a crutch and a hammer. You make a mistake, they are going to report you to someone. Some of them never learn to take responsibility for their learning or actions. This is a small number (less than 10%). Most of the students want to learn

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Accommodations

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Insufficient time to meet the needs of large numbers of students with IEP. Co-teachers who don't understand content well enough to help students.

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Class sizes are a problem. It's also extremely difficult to develop a good co-teacher/paraprofessional/assistant relationship. I have had several co-teachers or assistants that have rotated through my room, but it's hard to find someone consistent who is able to be involved directly in planning and implementing lesson plans and providing extra support. It has been exceedingly difficult this year with virtual learning.

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Making sure each student understand each lesson.

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Having time to meet all of the different needs.

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Class size and inconsistency with co-teaching and assistant support are the greatest challenges to IEP implementation. Having multiple students with IEPs can be planned for, but the time to assist multiple students can be overwhelming.

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Lack of time

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serving the students the way the should be

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Differentiation in general. I do this for all kids, a beginner, intermediate, and advanced track. You're creating the same class three times (and on multiple different instruments) which is a pretty challenging task that has taken years and still going

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I was just thinking about this the other day. I think the biggest challenge with implementing IEPs in the classroom is modifying the lessons, assignments, and tests without the other students finding out. Most of my students have not wanted to be pulled out of the classroom to take a test or read a piece of literature or whatever the case may be even though it will help them be more successful. Now, with virtual education, the modifications are even more difficult.

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Just ONE? Not fair. When the IEP is full of old material (nothing to help me in their current class), leaning heavily on math/English info and little else, with behavioral issues generically listed with almost no suggestion as to how it would look in my room, and then the IEP arriving sometimes a month after I have started working with a kid...well...

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Implementing their accommodations within the normal constraints of a gen ed class (time, class size, resources)

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Having time to meet with the student and check their progress, or having time to create alternate assignments if it's called for in the IEP.

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Number of different IEP's and distance learning make implementation difficult. It would also be helpful to have more time in the beginning of the year to work with Special Ed. teachers to review IEP's for students in our classes.

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Remembering all the accommodations for each student. The IEP is so long and wordy.

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Knowing who has them and what is on them. Often, I don't receive them, or not in a timely manner or I don't have time to read all of the IEP in detail for every student. Also, in a class of 35 with regular, sped, esl, and high ability students it is very difficult to modify for all of them. It is especially difficult when you have no consistent paraprofessional in the classroom.

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with the number of students to "handle" it is hard to always give everyone the personal time they need each day. each week yes, but each day is difficult especially since we don't see them face to face and they don't come to class anymore physically.

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Sometimes the accommodations can feel unrealistic. If 18/30 students in the class require small group testing, I don't know how to accomplish that in a realistic time frame with only two adults in the room. How can a teacher and co-teacher give that test to students in a truly small group (5-7 students), read the instructions, and provide extended time in a realistic time frame that doesn't affect the flow of the curriculum or course?

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Time and resources. There doesn't seem to be enough time in a day, or enough aids to provide the one on one support required.

The largest challenge would be having the time to read and remember all the different accommodations needed for each student in every class. I wish there was a way to make a spreadsheet or a database with all recommendations so we can type in the type of assignment and see who needs accommodations for it. Unfortunately, some accommodations slip through the cracks and we never really know.

Remote learning. Many students with disabilities struggle with the self-regulation and persistence required to participate in learning on a computer. The opportunity for small group and hands-on work is extremely limited.

Making sure that you are aware of all the students and what their needs are.

Perhaps the biggest hurdle is the number of students with IEPs - being able to manage all of those and meet the needs of every student is a real challenge. Especially when you may have 15+ students in a classroom with IEPs. The IEP paperwork in itself is daunting. Being able to quickly read an IEP and determine what the needs of the student are is something that takes time and practice. Teachers could absolutely benefit from having PL opportunities geared towards helping them understand what is in an IEP and how that's relevant to what they do in the classroom.

Getting the student to ask for the accommodation to which they are entitled.

IEPs are given to students with behavior issues primarily...this does not provide them with extra support that they need.

The IEP tells you nothing specific.

## **Q16 - What type of support if any are you given to effectively teach students with disabilities in you general education classroom?**

What type of support if any are you given to effectively teach students with disabilities in you general education classroom?

I have an assistant which helps tremendously. I also am given many resources.

support from the SPED teachers

Not much training was provided by the district. The only way to figure this out would be collaborative work with Special Needs teachers.

Not very much support. Almost all of the IEPs say test in small group, test read to student, and time and a half.

Some of my students are in a resource class a different period when they can help extra support from a special education teacher.

There is normally a classroom assistant or a special education teacher assisting in the room.

A co-teacher

When stated in the IEP, I get a co-teacher or assistant.

Other than the teacher of record, not much. Have always felt supported by admin and Sped department.

small group instruction. Eliminating quantity of assignments. Providing notes to students. Shorter exams, or extended time.



Usually given an IEP. Not aware of any other support.

I have a co-teacher or assistant in my integrated classes with special education students. Most of my students' co-teachers have been willing to chat with me to help discuss strategies.

assistance from other teachers and staff

co-teachers and a cop of the IEP. TOR's are available when needed.

Knowing which students have an IEP is helpful. Success is supported when general education teachers receive a copy of the IEP and when a student's TOR is in communication with the general education teacher.

None, although I know if I asked I would receive support.

I have co teachers before

The IEP that lets me know what may be going on with the student. It changes your approach with individual kids

I have two co-teachers and one classroom assistant. The co-teachers have helped in regards to ensuring that assignments meet the needs of our special needs students. The classroom assistant can be helpful in regards to keeping students on task, helping with their work, etc.

(there's a typo in the question, but I've probably had 10 in my answers, so...) Varies widely year to year and with whom I'm scheduled to work. SpEd teachers are usually buried in cases and get pulled to do other things. An untrained assistant can be more helpful, sadly, because they are there and not chained to a computer. We have a room for special help, but not confident in that help. I can hunt down their TOR (teacher of record). Some are immensely helpful, others just shrug it off. If there's another adult in the room, I can pull kids out to help them (or the other adult can).

We are given training sessions (PLs) to work on opportunities to improve lessons and find ways to differentiate in the classroom. We also have some AWESOME sped. teachers that will help us with anything we need. They can help implement new strategies or aid with individual student needs.

In one class I have a co-teaching special education teacher to help with accommodating IEP's. In the other integrated class I have a para to assist me.

IEP's are sent out at the beginning (or sometimes middle) of the year. I have co-teachers in some integrated classes. Some of the sp-ed teachers help communicate with me on behalf of the student.

Not much.

I have had useful training in the past provided by the district but have not had any training in recent years. There have been a few training courses from the special education department within my building and from the downtown area office that I found very useful in my first few years of teaching.

Co teachers or teachers aides.

I receive a summary email with their accommodations at the beginning of the year from all the TORs and sometimes that is it. Then at each quarter an email asking how they are doing in my class.

Regular communication with teachers of record. Assistants are provided but this is not an effective support as they either will not participate in computer-based instruction or they lack the content knowledge to effectively support students.

Ideas from teacher of contact, sending kids to get help when needed.

Assistance from the Special Ed teachers, Copies of the IEP's, TA's and Co-Teachers.

not

Resources and a plan that can actually be implemented or is a true plan.

## **Q17 - What are your concerns or suggestions about the developments and application of the IEP?**

What are your concerns or suggestions about the developments and application of the IEP?

No suggestions at this time

I would suggest offering collaborative time to teachers who have students with IEP's in their classes.

The IEPs are not specific enough to really help the student.

I believe that all students should be help to a high standard of understanding and performance. Sometimes I feel that the IEP's are written in a way that enables some students to not demonstrate the same mastery as general education students. I also believe the supports are not really specific to each individual student.

South has more IEPs than other high schools. Socio-economics clearly contribute to learning disabilities. What can we do to promote reading ability at a young age to help curb the number of IEPs.

I don't know much about it.

Not let elementary school people be so nice. Here is what I have observed. Once it is in the IEP, good luck getting it out. Students never need to learn their multiplication facts if they always get to use a calculator. They pay the price later. Also some behavioral issues are in the IEP that were needed in elementary, but are harmful higher up (could hit if becomes angry pretty much means can't be suspended. Try and explain that to the other parent when you can't)

Staffing in schools.

Sometimes IEP's come late into the year. No time to discuss students with TOR.

I have concerns with parents who are not involved or who are difficult to get ahold of for contact or involvement in writing the IEP in the first place. Several students who have accommodations written into their IEP do not take advantage of these supports.

None

Sometimes they all seem the same

Time and communication are vital.

None

getting it done

Keeping track of who is who, what modifications each should be getting and making sure they're being taken care of.

I think it is difficult when the student moves from elementary to middle and middle to high school to adapt the IEP's requirements for the new expected maturity level of the student.

They are so very generic. They cover legalities and give the classroom teacher very little. If there IS useful info, we have to tease it out of a girthy document. I NEED to know what that student struggles with and why. I need to know what will set them off. I need to know with whom they work well or not. I need to know how to help them grown, not just maintain. How can we develop skills and cultivate their unique potential? Their "specialty" may give them unique advantages and insight we all could benefit from. That is lost. Most teachers see them as a burden, not an opportunity, because (guessing) they feel unable to juggle it all.

Getting them to the teachers earlier in the year, and having time where the special ed. teachers can have a sit down talk with the general ed. teachers about their curriculum and actually getting into the material.

More regular interaction between special ed and content teachers will only help with making a stronger team.

It is not uncommon for me to forget that a child has an IEP. With emails coming in from several different teachers in various formats, it is easy for one to get lost. Students don't advocate for themselves and then parents get upset when a student has not asked for their accommodations. Some students also see their accommodations as a cheap way out. (Asking for extended time on a test when they wouldn't try it in the first place)

I feel it would be more effective to actually speak to the student's sped teacher and go over the IEP together.

I don't have a clear answer but I am concerned about the amount of time special education teachers are required to work on IEPs and contacting parents for annual case conferences. I understand the importance of the IEP and meeting with parents, but the amount of time and effort I see my coworkers spends on these things seems counterintuitive sometimes.

More communication between the TOR and the gen ed teacher.

It is very hard to make sure you are accommodating all IEP students to the best of your ability when you have 30 to 40 students in a class at a time.

Integration into the the gen ed classroom would be more effective with a thorough reevaluation of what remote learning looks like and how it can best serve the student with a disability. Because little comprehensive thought has been given to implementation of remote learning in general, students with disabilities are struggling with more significant obstacles to academic achievement.

Sometimes it seems like a formality.

Teachers must become more aware of how to interpret an IEP.

No suggestions right now.

Do away with them....focus on students that acctually have developmental issues impeding there learning/development and not hanging IEP's on studnent that are habitual behavior problems

They all generally say the same thing.

## Q18 - What are the roles and responsibilities of special and general education teachers in your inclusive classroom?

What are the roles and responsibilities of special and general education teachers in your inclusive classroom?

They are here as my co-teachers, and I value them more than words can say! We work as a team to ensure all of our students are supported and successful.

I didn't really get to experience working or collaborating with Special Needs teachers.

Both teachers should be helping all the student.

I appreciate the opportunity to gain insight about my students through their special education teacher. I also am thankful for the opportunity to work collaboratively to provide students with the best strategies for their success.

Both are considered co-teachers and should present the material to their students in a easy to understand format and both teachers can be utilized to provide services when needed to students with special needs.

Both contribute to instruction. Co-teacher can re-phrase or reteach when necessary and provide 1-on-1 help with students

It varies. The special education teachers help me to ensure that the IEP is being followed.

Try to coteach as much as possible. Have had it where we would alternate teaching lessons. Not every SPED teacher is comfortable with that. Definitely make sure when working with students that both of us work with gen ed and IEP students in class. They need to see both of us as a resource.

To help students better understand materials and work hand in hand with the gen ed teacher to make them aware of some of the accommodations needed for the special education students.

Due to limitations with special education teachers knowledge of content they generally end up being more of an assistant than a co-teacher.

I have been a part of a truly co-teacher partnership where the general education teacher and special education co-teacher shared a planning time and shared responsibilities for grading and instruction. Currently, I am the one who does most of the planning and grading, and the co-teacher spends time checking in with individual students or offering specific supports, but this is further complicated by the fact that many of our special education students were fully virtual this year.

making sure that all students receive the same teaching strategies.

They work with the students as needed

Special education teachers provide the copy of the IEP.

Provide insight and strategies

none. I don't have any at this time.

I do not have any other assistants in my classroom. Mine is specialized. I would think that they would be there to work with their specific students to be supportive when they need you

I have found with each co-teacher that we work out our respective roles as we teach. Each of us finds our strength and works to that. It is much easier to do if we are given time to collaborate.

Gen Ed teacher (me): maintain the least-restrictive environment and provide the general education experience faithfully, following the IEP without isolating and alienating the student from peers. SpEd teacher of record: get the IEP to Gen Ed teachers ASAP (right!), help trouble-shoot, apprise teachers of changes, monitor progress, be available to student or teacher for consult. Curious if they are able to help the student navigate with unyielding adults, which they need. SpEd co-teacher in the room: be the watch-dog of IEPs being followed, offer suggestions on how to do that and offer help--without being prompted--to students and teacher. Co-teaching isn't happening most places, but would be fantastic. They can also provide that one-on-one or small group testing/working environment we need. They can help with behavioral outbursts/help with co-regulation. Assistants: deeply affected by their experience level and their willingness and intuition, they are to follow directions of the teacher and provide added support for students as needed. They are also able to work with small groups or one-on-one. They can help us monitor IEPs and encourage co-regulation.

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In my classroom I don't have a co-teacher throughout the day so the roles of the gen. ed teacher are to teach all students providing supports and everything outlined in the IEP for the student, then checking in with the sped. teacher when necessary.

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Equal responsibilities fall on both parties. We are both able to present information and work with all students one on one or in small group or whole group.

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I am responsible for instructing the student to the best of my ability and making accommodations where appropriate. The sped teacher is responsible for communicating with me about the needs of each child and helping them advocate for themselves.

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To collaborate and tailor the curriculum and how it is delivered to sped students.

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Special and general education teachers are equal in the inclusive classroom and should share equal time instructing the class, helping students, and managing behavior. This can be very hard sometimes when special education teachers are pulled from their class for multiple reasons. It is also very hard to find the time to collaborate together, which I think is an important part of having a cohesive and inclusive classroom.

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Both teach periodically, both support students during lessons: they work as a team.

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I do not have special education teachers in my room because I am not one of the core classes anymore. However, last year I was teaching Math. Last year, I taught the class and the special ed teacher would walk around to help the IEP students during instruction. After instructions, we would break into groups and work in small groups. This helped differentiate the work load.

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When students are present, the support teacher circulates the room and provides encouragement and clarification to students who are struggling. When students are all remote, the support teacher joins the Zoom class and occasionally joins a breakout room for students collaborating.

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GE: provide access to the content and structure quality learning opportunities. SE: assist students in meeting the expectations given - support

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Varies depending on how comfortable the special ed teacher is with the material.

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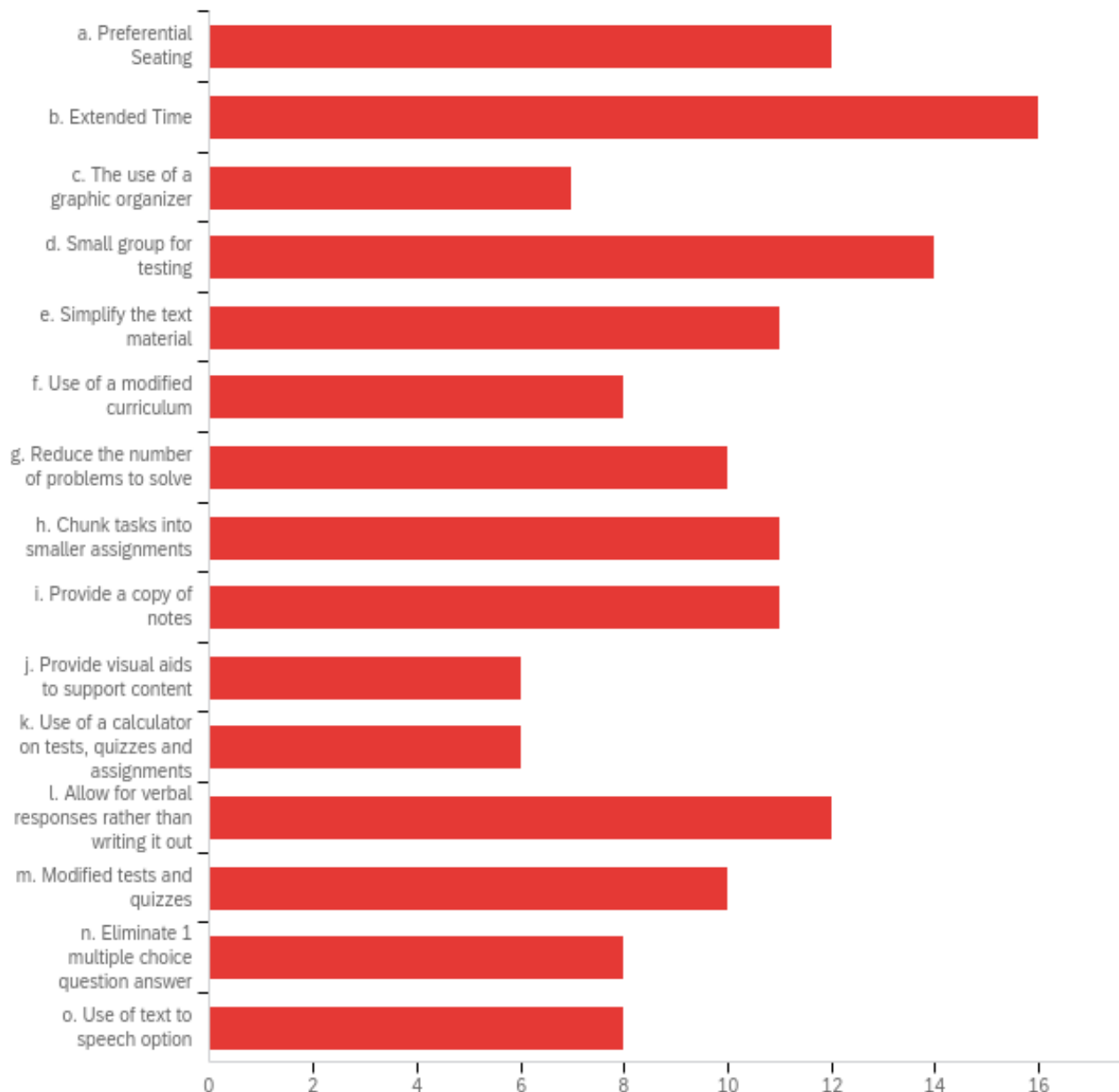
Dont have special ed aides in class.

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The rolls should be to work collaboratively to achieve a common goal. I feel that both teachers are able to provide instruction. The curriculum is already there, most teachers know how to teach.

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**Q19 - In regards to common IEP accommodations listed below, what challenges (if any) do you have in implementing them in your classroom? If you have not had to implement an accommodation listed, respond with which ones you have not with NA. If you have, how did you incorporate them in your curriculum?**



## Q21 - Accommodations Cont.

Accommodations Cont.

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d. When I do not have another adult in the classroom, small groups are difficult. g. District designed unit tests have set number of questions.

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Extended time I usually adjust by having them not do some problems - usually the more difficult. Provide a copy of the notes I struggle with. Most of the time the student if off task because they don't need to write stuff down where other students do. And when they see a person with the notes, they want to know why I won't give the notes to them. Hate this one Already mentioned use of calculator. Non-issue if take test somewhere else. Major issue if test in the room and other students can't use

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I have never had to use the following accommodations: F, K, M, N, O. Most of these accommodations have not been difficult to implement, but D, E & I are difficult to do without the support of a regular co-teacher. Extended time can be difficult to keep track of, because I try to make it clear upfront that extra time does not mean unlimited time -- assignments submitted extremely late are a problem here. The easiest to use is to chunk tasks -- I try to do this to benefit ALL students, not just special education students.

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I don't have issues making these accommodations.

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no challenges

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Preferential seating for those with hearing or visual impairments, or for those who can not sit next to certain people All of the others with checks, I differentiate the assessments (beginner/intermediate/advanced) and give them unlimited chances on performance tests within a semester. It is up to them to retake it with me. Even after being reminded several times though, many don't take me up on it. Notes and graphics are frequently used to help students understand concepts. Many struggle seeing simple basic patterns and reading a graph in music (like the musical alphabet A - G) Even with graphs/visuals this can be tricky for a percentage of our population

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I have used a. preferential seating: the only challenge is when I've had multiple students with that accommodation in the class because then I don't have enough preferred seats. b. extended time: this is not a challenge because I provide the entire class time if necessary for all students. Those who finish early are directed to read or work on other assignments. c. graphic organizers: this is a common tool in my classroom, so it is not a challenge. d. small-group testing: the only challenge, again, is when I have so many students with this modification that it is not possible to split them up into a small group. Oh, or if I do not have a co-teacher/assistant to send them with. e. simplifying text material: this is not difficult as there is a website that I use to help with this; however, it is difficult keeping the gen-ed kids from finding out and wanting the modified text also. The problem isn't that they want the modified text; it's that they know that a specific student/s received one. f. modified curriculum: this is difficult for the same reason as e. Another reason this is difficult is that everything in the curriculum leads up to the next skill, so if I modify it I might be removing something that could be useful to the student later. g. reduce the number of problems to solve: I am challenged by this because we do not do this type of work in the formative assessments. In summative assessments, I don't want to reduce the number of a specific type of question and make it more difficult for the student to master that skill. h. chunk tasks: this is something that I do naturally. It can drive my students crazy because they want to do the entire thing at once. i. provide a copy of notes: my only challenge with this is that I worry the student is missing out on learning the information during the note-taking process j. provide visual aids: I don't know if I do this or not. I draw a lot or provide pictures to help them see what I'm talking about when that is possible. k. use a calculator: NA l. allow for verbal responses instead of writing it out: this is a challenge because writing makes up a large part of the class m. modified tests/quizzes: I have tried to

do this for certain students, but it's difficult to hand them out without the other students realizing that some are getting different tests. n. eliminate multiple choice question answer: I don't have a problem doing this. o. test-to-speech option: my biggest challenge is remembering that this is an option and easy to do!

I'm not sure what you are asking me to do here...go over each one? Items g and k are the only ones that are NA for me. If I have a large class (normally do), this is impossible. Almost all of it. AND we are not fed this info! We have to go hunt for it. In a digital environment, this has all but gone out the window. I don't know when they want one of these, usually. Awareness and obligations to a large class are the biggest obstacles.

In my classroom there are already ELL modifications made to curriculum so many of these supports are built into every lesson.

The only issue I have had with any of the above is not having the space, the time, and not having the assistance to implement them. Also there are technical difficulties I have encountered for text to speech accommodations.

Being only one teacher in a classroom, I cannot offer small group testing or reading of the test. I feel that this would benefit my students, but with Covid, it is difficult to do this. Hopefully next year, I will be able to modify the testing more.

None of these accomadations address the root cause of behavior issues. Very few students acctually benefit from these types of educational modifications

## **Q20 - Please provide any recommendation to improve the IEP document.**

Please provide any recommendation to improve the IEP document.

Providing more opportunities for collaborative time with Special Needs teachers.

I cannot think of anything specific.

Have the committee not be afraid to make changes and take things out as the child gets older. It is not the parent or an advocate who has all the power. It is called a case conference decision. Sometimes we need to stand up to the parent and advocate. We need to do less enabling as the student gets older. Student accountability is not a term used often in an IEP.

More time and opportunity to discuss student with TOR

The IEP document seems very repetitive -- I do like the IEP at-a-glance that gives the highlights and that is very helpful for a general education teacher.

I am not knowledgable to provide such information at this time

funding for schools smaller class size

Make it sometimes easier to understand

Nothing from me

What if it included a student responsibility section as well as a teacher responsibility section? The responsibility of making accommodations falls on the teacher, but shouldn't the student (and perhaps the parent) have responsibilities regarding their academic success as well?



A punch line, so to speak. Tell me in a nutshell what works well and what to avoid (or use with caution). I shouldn't need to spend an hour sleuthing to find information. \_reading ability/help needed \_ability to do oral work in class (answer Q's, for example) \_physical challenges \_emotional concerns/land mines \_strengths (relevant to school, but the personal ones help, too) \_note-taking ability \_organizational skills/needs \_best suggestions on re-directing \_a sample of what the TOR considers an appropriate test (given that they are getting older, more capable potentially, every year, so we might be able to stretch) \_maybe a brief narrative from teachers for whom they were successful on best practices \_parent/guardian's preferred way to stay in touch (including time of day) \_student goals are usually not germane to class. What does the student want to see in my class? What would a good day look like to them? \_a STUDENT comment on what they feel they need/what they see/what they'd like in class as well as what they hope to heaven I DON'T do and why. I currently have to go hunt for most of this myself.

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More time for the gen ed teachers and sped teacher to talk about the students performance.

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Summarization at the end with some sort of chart to readily display accommodations and which classes they specifically apply to would greatly improve the utility of the IEP document.

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Shorten the document and amount of time required for special education teachers to complete the IEP.

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create a document that is easier for the lay person to read and understand.

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It would be great if it was just bullet pointed so I know the highlights of the issues that they have instead of so much information on there that we do not need to know.

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Quit giving IEP's to students that are behavior concerns & habitually non compliant. The IEP actually hinders their ability to receive and understand the consequences of their actions.

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## VITA

# Amy Groh

## Experience

**August 2019 – Present**

**Special Education Teacher,**

- Develop Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for each student
- Teach and mentor students as a class, in small groups, and one-on-one
- Co-teach to help support all students in the general education classroom
- Advocate for students with IEPs
- Implement IEPs, assess students' performance, and track their progress toward their goals and education
- Prepare and help students transition from grade to grade while earning the necessary credits to graduate

**October 2016 – August 2019**

**Skills Coach,**

Bowen Center

- Provide case management services to clients out in the community, in schools, and in their homes
- Assisted parents and their children, and other adult clients with psycho-social skill building practices
- Trained clients to use coping strategies, social skills, developmental skills and executive functioning skills
- Communicate and Travel to East Allen County Schools to provide skills coach services
- Complete all detailed documentation within billing requirements

Graduated: May 2014

## Education

Master of Science in Education

Major: Special Education

Graduated: May 2021

Bachelor of General Studies

Major: General Studies

Minor: Psychology

Minor: Human Services

## Skills

- Detail oriented
- Skilled in building relationships
- Self-motivated
- Adult/Child/Infant CPR, First Aid, and AED trained
- Computer software proficient
- Competent and trained in Powerschool Learning System
- Excellent organizational skills
- Presentation experience
- Proficient in working in a fast paced environment